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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE WARRIORS OF MANAWAKA: MARGARET LAURENCE'S THEMATIC BATTLES

BY

JAMES HUTSON

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta
FALL 1994

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE WARRIORS OF MANAWAKA: MARGARET LAURENCE'S THEMATIC BATTLES submitted by JAMES HUTSON in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

Nora Stovel

Nora Stovel

Dale Wilkie

Dale Wilkie

R. T. Harrison

John Foster

September 23, 1994

Abstract

Laurence makes significant use of warriors and the theme of war in her Manawaka fiction. In four novels (The Stone Angel, A Jest Of God, The Fire-Dwellers, The Diviners) and a collection of short stories (A Bird In The House), Laurence develops the theme of life-long war. The protagonists of these works battle the vagaries of life in their efforts to secure survival. Life, in Laurence's fictional space, is always lived in a state of siege. Survival depends upon one's personal fortification in both material and psychological terms. Faith in the validity of life, however harsh, is shown to be the corner-stone of endurance. With a kind of foundational hope, warriors find the strength necessary for self-defense in the proud legacy of ancestors: in the tales--mythic and real--passed down through the ages.

The goal of this paper is the revelation of the warrior-composition. It traces the elements of Laurencian battle consciousness from the author's own feelings concerning generic warfare to the physical, emotional and psychological make-up of the warrior herself.

Preface

This thesis, an analysis of the thematic role of war in Margaret Laurence's Manawaka Fiction *is divided into three chapters.*

The first of these, entitled War, *concerns Laurence's foundational, though contradictory, opinions on the subject. A close analysis of her non-fictional work, including her memoir,* Dance on the Earth, *reveals an intense and absolute hatred of human conflict. Generally, in the non-fictional forum, Laurence dismisses as malignant and false all romantic and heroic visions of battle, such as those which lured the young men of her father's generation to the bloody trenches of the Great War. From this perspective of Laurencian writings, war is man's unconscious, irredeemable aberration.*

And yet, strangely--considering the urgency of her anti-war message--this battle-consciousness is not the uniform declaration of the Laurencian canon. In the second half of Chapter One is an extensive examination of Laurence's literary infatuation with Mahammed 'Abdille Hasan, an early-twentieth-century Somalian warlord. In the biographical essay, "The Poem and the Spear," *Laurence admits to a kind of spiritual connection with this man whose primary, life-long goal was always the shedding of blood. Laurence forgives his brutality with reference to the general plight of the Somali people, who were then under threat from a harsh British colonial administration wielding "not superior values but merely more efficient weapons of killing" (*Heart *37). As a figure of Laurencian heroism (Gabriel Dumont is similarly anointed), Hasan points to the root of Laurence's battle-perspective: that the 'honour' of honourable war depends upon the necessity for self-defense. One fights heroically only from a state of siege --against the odds--against those "more efficient weapons" of adversarial life. This principle of war guides and determines Laurence's thematic use of battle.*

Chapter Two examines war as a largely psychological phenomenon in Laurence's five Manawaka books, The Stone Angel, A Jest of God, The Fire-Dwellers, A Bird in the House, and The Diviners. *Consistently, the protagonists of these works are women and, as such, do not experience warfare in the material sense: as*

active participants within the immediate, life-threatening limits of conflicts like Culloden, Batoche and Dieppe. However, Laurence portrays battles no less vicious along spiritual and mental lines. And the logic of these "quiet" wars mirrors that of Hasan, Dumont and others; the women warriors of Laurence's imagination fight, similarly, from a state of siege and against odds that often threaten to overwhelm. In Chapter Two, I explain the parameters of these psychological battlefields in order to analyze the two key elements of the warriors themselves: strength and unshakeable faith.

The final section, Chapter Three, contains three brief summaries of the major wars of Manawaka: Culloden (where the Highland Scots made their last stand in 1745), Batoche (Riel's final battle on the Saskatchewan plains in 1885), and Dieppe (the tragic Canadian beachhead in 1942 on the shores of occupied France). These historical occurrences--mytholigized and woven through the tapestry of Manawaka--serve as touchpoints for Laurence's thematic battling in her fiction. The three summaries of three battles include requisite maps and commentary concerning both their historic and mythic relevance to the Manawaka works. These bloody examples of true material war are shown to be merely harsher reflections of the psychological conflict that rages in Manawaka. The short histories, in Chapter Three, of Laurence's three most-revered wars contribute significantly to the analysis of the thesis as a whole.

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Chapter I:

War

1. Motherhood

Margaret Laurence begins her memoir, Dance on the Earth (1989), by considering the nature of war. She dismisses as "appalling and essentially quite false" that common equivocation of battle and birth in which a man's greatest life-experience involves the taking of life, while for women it is the giving of it (3). War, in this context, is the familiar grand spectacle of slaughter and geographic gain. In direct contrast, Laurence's ideal of motherhood postulates an all-encompassing, spiritual union of women laboring to *create* life. Though she appears to cast aside this far too limited binarism from the very outset of her memoirs, she returns to it nonetheless in her declaration that even "the noblest causes or the conquest of the whole world would not be worth the life of my son" (Dance 32). She speaks solely as a mother at this point against the proponents of noble causes, whom we infer to be men. Her dialogue, as a mother, is certainly historically viable, given that the greater portion of the propaganda of warring states is usually aimed at mothers and the homefront with the aim of promoting the surrender of sons to the fight. This puts women firmly on the sidelines. They do not participate in war as such, except as casualties and providers, but it is from within these common injustices of non-participatory infliction that Laurence divines the ideal, to which she often returns, of a global, life-giving sisterhood. In an article entitled "Open Letter to the Mother of Joe Bass," Laurence most clearly presents women and mothers as the undeserving victims of the violence that surrounds them (Heart 223). It is no coincidence that the article, which begins with a description of her own son's birth, goes on to describe the tragedies of two other women, both mothers, who have lost their sons to war of one sort or another. Laurence perceives inextricable ties between Mrs. Bass, the Vietnamese woman and herself. Each are mothers before any other role, and each knows, or thinks she can envision, the terrible loss of a child. In a war-zone, motherhood tends to be the equivalent of an entirely separate dimension. Laurence and all mothers are outsiders, observers like the eavesdropping protagonist of A Bird in the House, Vanessa MacLeod, who sees and hears everything, but cannot always understand. This notion of being outside, of mystification, of

pressing one's face to the glass to watch the boys fight, is a crucial element of Laurence's conception of war. None of her protagonists go to war themselves, and so their only contact comes through the second-hand tales and momentos and the visual images of others. "Real battles" (historical, material wars) --Culloden, Batoche, Dieppe and others--are therefore seen through a glass, darkly.

We of the late twentieth century, like Stacey Cameron, the protagonist of The Fire-Dwellers, have, from a significant distance, become intimately acquainted with the concept of voluminous death. Our society lives under unyielding bombardment from the "ever-open eye," that roving and violent educator--television--which seeks out and summarizes blood-letting wherever it occurs. Like Stacey, we live in a world on fire, the details of which, however gruesome, can be accessed at the flick of a switch. However, this over-exposure represents, in itself, a tangible peril of which Laurence is acutely aware. She fears that the incessant, habitual dose of war and violence on the evening news may be gradually hammering us into submission, into a horribly casual acceptance of war as just another unavoidable, albeit bloody, phenomenon: as natural, perhaps, as the birth of a child. It is a phenomenon already adopted by some from perspectives that she herself terms "obscene." These are the vantage points of the new *geopolitik,* the dwelling-places of generals and statisticians who coldly consider the possibilities of nuclear devastation. "I hate the men who make wars," Laurence writes. "I hate... the old military men who talk of 'megadeaths' and 'acceptable losses.' I hate them with all my soul and voice" (Dance 32). She cannot bear to think of war outside its implicit consequences, beyond the eradication of life, the wounds inner and out that never heal, and the unforgiveable degradation of the human spirit. A strong emotive current traverses Laurence's writing--particularly in her non-fictional work--that suggests that war is, in any age, for any reason, beyond redemption. This feeling is most completely expressed in her unretractible statement that no cause, however worthy, could be worth the life of a son.

Such initial and cursory glances at Margaret Laurence tend to yield for the role of war in her books an extremely negative and one-dimensional character. Yet, given the ancestral, historical and cultural settings of the Manawaka works, the thematic role of

war(s) should never be understated. Battlefields ranging through time and space from Culloden to the beaches of Dieppe are relentlessly visited by the forefathers and descendants of Manawakans from The Stone Angel to The Diviners. No-one is left untouched by war. It is always there, lurking in the silenced voices of survivors, peeking evilly from photo albums, hovering over the bowed heads of veterans on the steps of the Queen Victoria Hotel. War, an indivisible element of the prairie town, is one of the many traces that remain forever in the memories of those who try to escape their pasts. It is as much a part of Manawaka as the Wachakwa Valley, the Nuisance Grounds, and the slow, hazy haven of the Regal Café.

"I hate oppression and brutality and the demeaning of the human spirit *whenever* they occur," Laurence writes (Dance 32 italics mine). Vanessa MacLeod voices a similar hatred in a conversation with her airman-lover, Michael, as they discuss his imminent departure for embattled Europe. In Vanessa's mind, the war "meant only that people without choice in the matter were broken and spilled, and nothing could ever take the place of them" (Bird 182). She conceives of war in the narrowest of ways, as nothing more than the human degradation upon which Laurence herself has undeniably fixed her scorn. Vanessa cries against the brutality she has envisioned through the stories of her father's war. Her compassion for "people without choice" is an extension of Laurence's own feelings concerning injured innocents--women--for Vanessa herself is soon to become a casualty of war herself. She will lose her airman all right, but not the way she thinks. He is not fated for a romantic death over foreign fields. The truth is (for Vanessa, at least) somewhat worse. As her best friend Mavis tells of the existence of Michael's wife, Vanessa is wounded in a way that will never completely heal. It will always hurt "to some extent" her mother warns. "There doesn't seem to be anything anybody can do about that" (186). At this point, she symbolically enters that giant Laurencian sisterhood of pain and, naturally, it is mother who inducts her. A tendril of war has touched Manawaka and raged on the dance floor of the Flamingo Hall. Consequently, as a casualty of war, Vanessa is single-minded in her opinion of a conflict she has expanded to encompass the totality of conflicts everywhere. Her one consideration of war stems from that profound and personal pain. But her stated anti-war credo "that

would never change" (182) is most deficient in broader reference. The events raging far away, across the unimaginable seas, are reduced, in Vanessa's mind, to her experience with Michael and the memories of her father. Neither points of reference are particularly viable in the historical sense of World War Two. But this view of conflict at arms-length--an outsider's view--is characteristic of Laurence's distanced 'motherhood'. Vanessa does not, or cannot, think of the fighting in its greater political perspective, for she neglects to mention the causes of war in her condemnation of it. She forgets to place, next to the mental images of innocence "broken and spilled" (her own innocence, mainly, for it is her *heart* that is broken, in addition to the bodies of "people without choice") the true and obscene realities of the real situation. She requires, perhaps, for a more equitable judgement, visions of Treblinka, and the Blitz, and the emaciated, besieged citizens of Leningrad. She ought to know, or at least be aware of, the underlying incentives to go to war. Vanessa, like Laurence, seems to be guilty of tunnel vision.

Does absolute condemnation of human conflict really have a place in intelligent thought? Absolutes, in general, ought to be avoided at all times, for there are always exceptions to the rule, and very often there are more exceptions than evidence. This is certainly the case in Laurence's work, for despite her seemingly airtight opinion, there are celebrated elements of war in every corner of Manawaka. One critic, writing on the topic, has even gone so far as to accuse her of being romantic. "She is fascinated by military exploits," writes Laurie Ricou, "and often seems... romantic about the 'sodden red of war" (177). The 'sodden red' to which he refers is from Sir Henry Newbolt's "Vitae Lampada," a poem of shameless heroics and old-school honour that typified the sort of romantic propaganda issued to draw recruits for the First World War. Its contemporary popularity soared in Canada, and Newbolt himself sarcastically described it as our "national anthem" (Howarth I). However, the poem represents exactly the sort of sentiment that Laurence claims to despise most because it glorifies death for one's country and for the continuation of the eternal fight. It encourages the sacrifice of one's sons. The final stanza ends with:

> This they all with a joyful mind
> Bear through life like a torch in flame,
> And falling fling to the host behind--
> Play up! Play up! and play the game. (Howarth i)

However, in The Diviners, as Morag "tries to imagine the War," instead of praying for it, she thinks, curiously, of Newbolt's vision. It is very likely the only *sort* of war poetry Morag has ever been taught in school, and yet I don't think Laurence includes "Vitae Lampada" merely for the sake of historical accuracy. Morag draws at least a part of her conception of war from this work of rank sentimentalism. She feels that the bloody imagery is "really something," though "the rest of the poem is crap" (122). She appropriates what she thinks she can use, but she ought never to forget the source. Morag, like Laurence, has constructed her morality on inconsistent foundations, because all her rage against the unbearable nature of war is mixed, though sometimes in miniscule proportions, with the roots of war-romance. The sentiments enshrined in "Vitae Lampada" recur throughout the Manawaka fiction, but Laurence speaks directly against such sentiments in her memoirs. She cites a passage from her father's Battery Book (a diary of military operations) that speaks to the glories of dying "worthily" for one's country. Laurence's response is definitive. She thinks of the horrors of the Second World War and the false hopes of her father's generation--that they had fought the war to end all others--and concludes that war is irredeemable. In the Battery Book is a vague and shattered hope that "perhaps a higher civilization may be built on the ruins of the old" (Dance 31). Laurence sees in these words the insanity and paradox of the human condition. "I could weep with grief and rage," she writes (Dance 31). It would seem that, on the subject of war, the jury is certainly in.

Laurence was born Margaret Jean Wemyss on July 18, 1926, in Neepawa, Manitoba, in Canadian Military District 10. She was born into a region of proud military heritage, into the sort of population which yielded to the war effort in 1914 fifty-five hundred volunteers in just twelve days. In the heady days of Imperial fever the quota for the first contingent was quickly filled, men who were to hold the lines under chemical attack at Ypres and win for the Canadian infantry what John Buchan was later to describe as "the Thermopylae of Canadian arms." W.L.

Morton, in his widely acclaimed Manitoba: A History, writes that "among *no* element of the population was there actual or immediate opposition to Canada's participation in the war" (339 italics mine). In fact, the people were volunteering so eagerly that a second contingent was soon set up to take them. Manitobans proved to be skilled warriors and distinguished themselves in every way. Fourteen men from the province won the Victoria Cross, including three boyhood friends who had lived on the same street in Winnipeg, thereafter named Valour Road. The war, in its own way, had a positive effect on Manitoba as a whole. It "had not only recalled the province to a sense of being part of the Canadian nation... the tale of battle honours indeed gave cause for pride" (Morton 359).

In 1939, the Manitoban units were called again to action, only this time, after a long lull of inactivity, to the initial bitterness of defeat. The battle of Dieppe, so often mentioned in the Manawaka works, included five hundred and three men of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders (the regiment of Jules Tonnerre). The Camerons, based in Winnipeg, who were often praised for penetrating further into enemy territory than any other group (Maguire 84), lost two hundred and fifty three soldiers that day: abandoned on the beach as either corpses or prisoners. And the prisoners would suffer months of 'special' treatment as a result of carelessness on the part of High Command because the Germans had found written orders among the invaders instructing Canadian troops to tie up any German prisoners they could take. These instructions, contrary to the Geneva Convention, infuriated Hitler to such a degree that he ordered all Canadian prisoners to be manacled in retaliation (Whitehead 172). Meanwhile, in far away Hong Kong, after garrison duty on the island of Jamaica, the poorly trained Winnipeg Grenadiers were easily overrun by the Japanese, "followed by the grim silence of four years in captivity" (Morton 444). Other Manitobans fought in Italy with Montgomery and suffered in the fierce fighting for Dutch Islands and the Lower Rhine. And while soldiers risked their lives for the Allied cause overseas, at home the resident Manitobans declared their unprecedented support for the effort. When, in 1942, it was becoming apparent that the shortage of troops would necessitate conscription, contrary to King's election promise, eighty percent of Manitobans supported conscription in a national plebiscite. In the

rest of Canada, taken all together, the affirmative vote was only sixty percent.

Such are the roots of Margaret Laurence. A self-proclaimed student of history, she was not unaware of her own. Laurence admits to having read Morton's History in the same summer that she began The Diviners . In a letter to Clara Thomas, Laurence credits Morton for presenting "a sense of the history, the overview which I think I share" ("Ossian" 62). However, Morton, who speaks freely of "battle honours" and heroics on the field, has surely not espoused the irredeemable nature of war. War for its own sake is surely evil, but wars are rarely waged for their own sake. Morton's Manitobans deeply regret the loss of their sons, and yet they love the liberty, or at least the absence of tyranny, for which they gave their lives. And Laurence, like every Canadian, is the recipient of a military inheritance: the knowledge of a debt unpayable, yet receding with the passing of time and the coming of generations unsullied by battle. This paling military memory is one of Laurence's most poignant themes, but she herself is incapable of forgetting, having been too close, literally and figuratively, to the wars of her youth. The wars are inside her, like those bits of Manawaka that cling to Morag no matter how far she runs. Laurence dismisses war, but she does not uphold her dismissal. She *does* recognize the potential honour and the actual glory and the true heroes who fight on the battlefields of life. She takes the concept of war and threads it through her work, discovering in her characters a parallel dimension, a war of the psyche in which her women rage like Napoleons. And by doing so, Laurence disproves the possibility of absolutes, for war is just a concept, really, and, as such, can be neither wholly good nor evil.

2. The Sayyid

The journey into Laurence's battle-consciousness begins with her earliest works. Her first major publications drew from the experiences of living in the British Protectorate of Somaliland (part of present-day Somalia) and then the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and were, not surprisingly, concerned with African themes: tribal ties, imperialism and the painful infancy of independent states. Having temporarily emigrated with her husband Jack, an engineer

in the Colonial Service, Laurence remained a stranger in a strange land for nearly seven years: from 1950 to 1957. She was about as far, mentally and geographically, as one could be from the future motherlode of her success--Manawaka--but she soon turned her mind to literary pursuits. The fruits of these labours remained, for the most part, unrealized while living in Africa itself, but the 60's would be the witness of the literary birth of Margaret Laurence. A number of African stories began appearing in Canadian periodicals, beginning with the "Drummer of All the World," in Malcolm Ross's Queen's Quarterly. The publication of This Side Jordan, a novel based in Ghana, followed in 1960, and then The Tomorrow-Tamer (a collection of short stories) and The Prophet's Camel Bell (a non-fictional work about living in Somalia) in 1963, as well as a number of other articles and stories concerning African themes. However, while actually living in Somalia, she managed to collect and translate major Somali poems and stories, which were eventually published, in 1954, under the title, A Tree For Poverty. This book represented, for Laurence, more than literary achievement, for it was only through poetry that she was able to gain true, though limited, access to the Somalian people. As a white *memsahib* Laurence could not entirely avoid assuming the despised colonial role. But she could enter the poetry skinless and sexless, as it were, and in that sacred space of tradition and myth learn from the unbiased tongues of the masters. It was here that she first learned of the heroic Sayyid, Mahammed 'Abdille Hasan, the subject of Laurence's revelatory work, "The Poem and The Spear."

This essay, written in 1964, is of paramount importance to a study of Laurence's battle-consciousness, for it tends to define the parameters of 'acceptable war'--that of the underdog--war that rages in prose, in the mind and on the true and bloody battlefields for the sake of those who cannot possibly triumph. Written "for... [her] own interest" (Heart 37) in the year of the Stone Angel's publication (1964), it is the first work in which Laurence *directly* addresses the issue of war and warriors. A similar, though far more subtle process was already underway in the presentation of battle-scarred Hagar, but Laurence's portrayal of Hasan, the bloody minded-poet, represents in all of her writing the clearest repatriation of the role of war and the placement of war in literature. The Sayyid's war of the early twentieth century was

for independence from what was then the most powerful force on Earth: the British Empire. But Laurence figuratively connects him with the combatants at Culloden and Batoche, wars closer to home in the Manawaka sense, though universal in their representation of oppressed and desperate peoples. Those other wars--Highland and Métis--are two of the three most cited conflicts in the Manawaka fiction (Dieppe being the third). In Heart of A Stranger (1976), a collection of essays, Laurence introduces her previously unpublished "The Poem and the Spear" by recognizing the intractable links between wars that cannot be won. In his own impossible *Jihad* (or holy war), as Laurence tells it, the Sayyid battled "not superior values...[but merely] more efficient weapons of killing" (37). His destruction came at the hands of western industrial progress, it would seem, as opposed to divine design, as perhaps some colonial administrator might have hoped. "This same theme came into my novel, The Diviners," Laurence writes in the introductory notes to the essay, "in the portions which deal with the Highland clans and with the prairie Métis" (37). In fact, the theme had appeared much earlier than she claims, for the portraits of oppressed and outgunned people are those of Hagar, Stacey, Rachel, Vanessa and Morag, too. For they must likewise battle imeasurable odds against the weight of a world trying to harness them. And like those of the warrior-sheik Hasan, the wars of Manawakans are equally determined by faith, by the strength of will on the part of individuals to perceive the reasons to continue surviving, the reasons to justify hope. For the Sayyid was a man of incredible faith, and that is the human quality Laurence loves most.

"I was... drawn to... this early nationalist leader in Somaliland," Laurence writes. "[I] had the feeling that his life had something to tell me" (37). Understandably then, in the context of battle-consciousness, Laurence's conception of such a life has a great deal to tell *us*. Perhaps it would be best to begin with the title of the essay itself--"The Poem and The Spear"--in which Laurence has indeed captured the essential dichotomy of the man: half warrior, half poet. In her work on Somali poetics, Laurence had first been able to appreciate Hasan as a literary master of the *Gabei* poem, which involves, in the intensely oral Somali culture, the most difficult and highly regarded poetic conventions. But the *Gabei* could generally consider only one of two themes: either love or war. For Hasan, the central issue was always the waging of

war, "his life's mission" (47), and this was as much a reaction to oppressive imperialism as it was a product of Somali culture. Laurence often defines the virtues of Somali society in terms of violence, which she then forgives for being simply "the harsh code of survival developed by those who dwell in deserts" (39). And there in the central dictates of the code of desert children is the naked glorification of battle: "to become a skilled spearman and horseman... to be merciless to his enemies...to seek honour *where a man should find it* --in battle and the loot of battle" (39 italics mine). But in the able hands of a *Gabei* master, words, rather than spears, were the most efficient weapons. The *Gabei* is like a giant tree stretching out over the people for shade. The tree has many branches, for poetry is diverse, and in a land largely bereft of telegrams, railways and mass communications, information is passed on most effectively by word of mouth. And so the *Gabei*, when it was worthy, simultaneously informed, cajoled, threatened and praised, from fireside to fireside across the lonely Haud, and there were then few men alive who could compose them as well as Hasan. No other medium could have been more effective in raising the people to fight. As the composer of poetry, Hasan was also the gatherer of men. Poetry and war were one and the same, each drawing strength from the other. So too was the warrior and poet effectively brought together in a single soul. It was this strange sameness, this blending of pen and steel that most impressed Laurence and drew her to his name. His corporeal apex of war and words would influence her Manawaka works, for she too would embody the poem and the spear by writing poetically of wars of the mind.

But it must be remembered that Hasan's wars were *real* in their wanton destruction of human life. The invocation to "be merciless to his enemies" was never meant figuratively, for the Sayyid's central aim was always the spilling of blood. Laurence certainly recognized the man's brutality, on one occasion exemplified in a *Gabei* celebrating the violent death of a British officer. "The poem has an exultant rage in it," she writes, "as though the Sayyid were compelled to draw out his enemy's suffering, to linger over it in hate-filled detail." In acidic verse, Hasan tells the dead man, Richard Cornfield, how he should explain his death at the gates of Hell:

> Say: "As I looked fearfully from side to side, my heart was plucked from its sheath."
> Say: "My eyes stiffened as I watched with horror; The mercy I implored was not granted."
> Say: "Striking with spear butts they have silenced my soft words."
> … Say: "Beasts of prey have eaten my flesh and torn it apart for meat." (70)

One wonders how, in the shadow of Laurence's loathing of war and the demeaning of the human spirit, she could let such horrific imagery and implication pass by without a condemning comment or two or an appropriate 'horrors of war' digression. But this absence of the expected is what lends "The Poem and the Spear" its significance within the Laurencian canon. For not only does she not condemn Hasan for his promotion of war, *she openly sympathizes with it.* On the one hand, with the cautious fear of seeming superior, she tends to excuse the Sayyid's brutality with reference to his tribal society. A hard life of oppression, she suggests, coupled with poverty and the ruthlessness of Nature, are the natural antecedents of a battle-oriented culture. This line of reasoning forgives any violent act. For instance, Laurence prefaces the historical indications of Hasan's use of torture with extensive and rather fatalistic reference to his severe environment, as if the violence and desecration of human life evident among the Somalis were simply unavoidable, if unsightly, manifestations of a life of extreme hardship. In the matter of torture, Laurence strings a list of probable causes before reporting that Hasan likely inflicted pain and death on his prisoners for the sole purpose of venting his own frustrations and rage. "If we consider Mahammed 'Abdille Hasan within his cultural framework," Laurence writes, "a warrior reared in a rigid tribal system which equated mercy with weakness, it seems highly likely that..."(70). These explanations--excuses, really--are not the words of that cool, single-minded critic she appears to be in her memoir, for in this case Laurence makes the effort to look beyond the stark and revolting qualities of war to the issues that lie beneath. She does what Vanessa is incapable of doing. Laurence looks away from the immediate reality--violent death, that deformation of humanity--to a new and more rational appreciation. The bulk of the article is devoted to historical examination, rather than emotive wanderings: the kind of deeper thought that brings Laurence round to an open sympathy for the

Sayyid's cause. He was a savage man, and yet within the given framework of his political situation, she understands his brutality. He murdered and tortured and terrified his enemies, and yet she finds for him appropriate justification, given that his enemies were in the process of destroying his people's whole way of life. The Sayyid was, without question, also an oppresser (considering his genocidal attitude towards the tribes that refused to follow him), a brute, and certainly a demeanor of the human body and spirit. Yet Laurence forgives him these crimes in the name of a greater cause. One could say that her forgiveness stretches even as far as collaboration in her lament for the inadequate nature of his death (the result of advancing age). The extent of her sympathy is really quite astounding. In words that might have issued just as easily from Sir Walter Scott, Laurence speaks to the glory of human war: "[Hasan] ought to have died in battle," she writes, "but this death was not *granted* to him" (67 italics mine). Laurence longs for the fitting and Homeric demise of heroes, and here she expresses a kind of faith in the reality of heroic ideals, the sort of sentiments found in Newbolt's "Vitae Lampada," for instance. But in the case of the Sayyid, as, indeed, with all of Laurence's claimed heroes of war, there is that essential status of the underdog that draws them all together. This criterion, most likely the result of her experiences with colonialism in Africa, belongs to a kind of warfare that can be best described as self-defence.

Colonialism represents the most destructive sort of oppression, for the colonizers seize not only the material resources of the land, but act also to eradicate the religion, organization and traditions of its people. Thus, in the case of Somaliland, Hasan promotes his war for the sake of an entire way of life. After all, any land can recover from the rape of its resources (though in Somaliland, there are few of these), but the destruction of a culture cannot ever be reversed. Only wars that oppose such destruction find redemption in Laurence's eyes, and the redemption, we ought to note, is absolute. There is a sense in her description of these colonial conflicts that the right to kill is achieved, automatically, by the underdogs--those who do not possess the "more efficient weapons of killing"-- as if within the auspices of some cosmic equity legislation. She is able to describe Gabriel Dumont as "a truly heroic man" (Heart 227), as

opposed to the head of the Canadian troops, that "dreadful General Middleton" (229), who was, coincidentally, the wielder of superior weapons. Dumont reclines with the Sayyid within the Pantheon of Laurencian heroes. The Somali chief is a glorious warrior fighting the good fight of that other great soldier, Saint Paul. War, as perpetrated by these men, is surely not treated by Laurence as humanity's aberration. Rather, these warriors are celebrated for performing their duty, for protecting themselves and their people with the last pieces of their own souls. There is, of course, an inherent contradiction within this philosophy of the oppressed. Laurence's judgement of war is inversely related to the 'quality' of the oppression: those people forced to live in the greatest misery may lay claim to the clearest justification for violent reaction. Her own justification of war seems to depend upon an assumption of virtue on the part of the oppressed--virtue far surpassing, in any case, that of the oppressor. However, history teaches us again and again that only the powerless can afford to be pure. It is always the administrator, the power-broker with multitudinous interests to address, who finds virtue to be an impossibility. I wonder if Dumont would still claim Laurence's respect had he won his war against the Canadians and established his own power. And would she have been so strongly drawn to the Sayyid had he defeated the British somehow and gone on to enslave the tribes around him? Fortunately, her chosen heroes were already long dead and incapable of changing or being challenged by that enduring lesson that power corrupts. The deification of contemporary rebels like Castro or Lec Lewensa might have proven disastrous in the long run, for the lines dividing hero from fiend are easily crossed. Essentially, one's right to battle is measured, in Laurence's scales, by the standards of military ineffectiveness.

In that grand, though losing, defence of liberty, Laurencian combatants exist in a state of siege within fortresses physical and metaphysical: physical in the sense of actual military employment (the Sayyid's encampment at Taleh, for instance), as opposed to the overtly spiritual protections (like the Cannery to which Hagar escapes, a space of concealment which allows her to feel "somehow more barricaded, safer" [155]). For Laurence, the only heroes are the ones who, for the sake of a cause larger than themselves, rail incessantly against the odds, against what seems, to the pragmatist at least, to be an impossibility. But this is not

to suggest an affinity for martyrs, for she is always suspicious of them. The ultimate aim of the Laurencian hero is survival on his or her own terms. The true heroes of life are those who refuse to be compromised. This, for Laurence, represents the sole criterion that separates the gore from the glory, that forgives the brutality of conflict. In this way the Sayyid is redeemed. "For twenty years he fought them," Laurence tells us, but his was not that insane, fruitless slaughtering suffered by her father and Uncle Jack in the muddy trenches of France. Above the bitter siege of Taleh, and the bloody death of Richard Cornfield, and the image of the Nogal Valley, where "the Sayyid's warriors fell like scythed grass" (52), Laurence carefully displays one of Hasan's many letters to the British administration. She includes it with purpose, I think, because it so eloquently summarizes the Sayyid's motivations--those that include him within a heroic brotherhood of arms--to carry the Pauline fight to its inevitable conclusion:

> We have fought for a year. I wish to rule my own country and protect my religion… We have both suffered considerably in battle… God willing, I will take many rifles from you, but you will not get any rifles from me *and I will not take your country* . This country is all bush, and no use to you… If you wish war, I am happy; if you wish peace, I am also content. But if you wish peace, go away from my country to your own. (50, italics mine)

When it is a question of an entire way of life dying beneath oppression, Laurence's hind-sighted instruction to Somalis, Highlanders and Métis alike is drawn from Dylan Thomas and also serves as Hagar's creed:

> Do not go gentle into that good night,
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light. (Stone 1)

In the reality of human bodies--in the actual wars of men--this rage is the purveyor of death, but here death is sufficiently cleansed in the springs of worthy causality. Thus is Laurence able to reconcile her aversion to war and embrace the battles she believes to be just. In this way she discerns the valour of Culloden--where Highlanders charged the Sassenach (Lowland) cannons armed only, and uselessly, with Claymores--from the

squalid blood-letting of the Somme where ten thousand men fell in a single day. At Culloden, the Highlanders made their last, furtive stand for the sake of a whole culture and a way of life. But for the World Wars, Laurence yields not a gram of compassion, in part, perhaps, because they have touched her too personally. However, the main cause for her scorn lies within their apparent inability to bring about definitive solutions. In Laurence's view, these global wars do not seek closure. They seem, instead, to spawn each other from age to age: a tragic, desperate relay of horror and destruction. Sadly, she does not appear to apply to them the same depth of reasoning evident in her perusal of Somalian history. The results of this policy are the broad, unforgiving condemnations of conflicts so large and multifarious that they are almost impossible to conceive, much less condemn. But the judgement of history is not in the hands of Margaret Laurence, nor is it, I am relieved to say, the responsibility of this extended paper. What matters for us, in terms of the Sayyid's story, is the sympathy for war of which Laurence proves herself infinitely capable. This violent man, this warrior to whom she was "somehow drawn" (37) represents that side of her consciousness that lives in and engenders her battle-minded characters.

Chapter II:

Warriors

1. The Fields of Battle

In 1981, speaking on the subject "Books That Mattered to Me," Laurence discussed her personal reaction to Timothy Findley's The Wars: "This novel," she said, "is written out of Ontario and the First World War, but Findley is in fact talking about *all* wars, those within the individual human being, those concealed but sometimes deadly ones that can occur within a family and, finally, those insane slaughterings that constitute wars between nations" ("Books" 249). Laurence, too, deals with the multiple levels of war in her own fiction: the insane slaughterings enshrined in the battles of Dieppe and Bourlon Wood; the glorified struggles against imperialism conducted by prairie horselords, the Métis; the concealed but deadly family campaigns like those of Vanessa and her Grandfather Connor; and, finally, those protracted inner struggles of individuals trying to retain their pride and independence in the face of countless adversaries. The latter two mediums of war represent the constant psychological battles for identity, an ideal both visceral and quantitative in the Manawaka works. The generic and struggled-for Manawaka 'self' is drawn (continually) from bipolar extremes: from the past (in terms of one's mythical heritage) and from the present (the ongoing battles of everyday existence).

"The point of the past," as Clara Thomas notes, "is its active function in our present, not a vanished reference point on which to focus fond nostalgia, resentment or regret" ("Ossian" 56). Indeed, Laurence's characters do not simply *engage* in reflection from time to time for amusement. They actually exist within a complex merging of past and present. When Ella, from The Diviners, admits to sometimes feeling that she is living several lives at once, Morag is knowingly sympathetic: "I know. Jesus, do I ever know" (230).

The most prevalent image offered by Laurence in The Diviners is that of a river that flows both ways, the "River of Now and Then". The current flows north to south, but the wind usually blows from the south: an "apparently impossible contradiction" (Diviners 11) that nonetheless exists, metaphorically, in every Manawaka book. Morag's fascination with this seemingly inexplicable phenomenon is indicative of the linear nature of Western Thought: the tendency to consider isolated occurrences only within the context of a greater progression of events, a

progression that is always marked by time. Morag's river defies this principle in that the direction of its flow does not contribute to any conceivable destination. The water is alive and clearly in motion, yet it does not progress. So, too, are her protagonists alive and in motion, and yet their stories do not move *forward* at any accelerated rate, for they are told, to a great degree, through the backward-moving narratives of flashbacks. The degree to which Laurence writes through the past varies, of course, from book to book. Hagar, from The Stone Angel, "rampant with memory" (5), is revealed almost exclusively in the text of her own biased and extended reflections. Likewise, Morag lives, for the most part, in memories, as she gathers material for her last book, which will be an autobiography of sorts (Laurence herself refers to The Diviners as her own "spiritual autobiography" [Dance 6]). The Cameron sisters--Rachel, from A Jest of God, and Stacey, from The Fire Dwellers--also delve, in varying degrees, into their memory banks: reaching for distant mirrors to see themselves as they were. Stacey yearns for a lost, dancing youth, while Rachel rediscovers the oppressive rearing of her mother and the dark, life-killing man who was her undertaker-father: the shadow Prince. At first glance, Vanessa, from A Bird in the House, does not appear to live in memory like the others. And yet her entire childhood narrative is the memory of a much older woman, one who returns, on a kind of pilgrimage, to Manawaka in the last story of the collection, "Jericho's Brick Battlements." There, she re-discovers what was once Grandfather Connor's imposing domain to learn the most poignant lesson of memory-seekers: that what endures resides within *us*, rather than in the physical world. "The house had been lived in by strangers for a long time," Vanessa realizes; "... it was their house now, whoever they were, not ours, not mine" (191). The 'new' Manawaka--that abode of strangers--is equally no longer her own. But the physical displacement is irrelevant, for the true image of the prairie town, the only one that will ever matter to her, is lodged forever in Vanessa's own mind. And only from *that* sacred space--mythical now, with the passing of time --does she draw her strength. She comes to understand that her own past thrives and rages within her, untended, yet impervious to the normal decay of time. The old man, whom she had "feared and fought" and who represents the totality of her Manawaka heritage, "proclaimed himself in...[her] veins" (191). The spiritual, as

opposed to geographical, journey of the collection is, at that moment, complete. The knowledge Vanessa gains on the boards of that now alien porch encompasses Laurence's conception of the inevitable journey home. "People always want to get out," she says, in "A Conversation with Margaret Laurence," "and yet profoundly want to return. It almost seems that people have to go away and go through the processes of learning about the rest of the world, and then they have to return. But whether or not they return in the flesh is unimportant. It is a return in a spiritual way" (Kroetsch 54).

These memories of a lifetime represent the immediate, as opposed to the mythical, pasts of Laurence's characters. Their memories are real and historically viable for the most part, and yet are always partly fabrication, too, for they are constantly being altered to suit the needs of the one who recalls them. In history is inherent truth, so long as it remains unwritten and wholly undetached from human contemplation. An event which has occurred retains at least the bare validity of its own occurrence only in the absence of external observation and report. Does a falling tree, undetected, in the forest make a sound? Laurence weaves the ambiguity of this ancient dilemma into the fabric of her novels. The trees, in her context, are the great moments of influence known by Manawakans: Jules' moment of fire on the shale slopes of Dieppe; Hagar's incipient nausea in the presence of half-hatched chickens; Niall Cameron's unsteady communications to Rachel from the other side of the mortuary door. The sound, if it occurs at all, is often indistinct and unreliable, for it is fashioned, always, by the fragile psyche of the hearer and, later, of the rememberer. This ambiguity is most obvious in the cases of the grand events in which the experiences of many are brought to bear, like the memories of battles, for instance. In these situations the recollections of individuals clearly comprise only mere fragments of the whole. The 'big picture,' as it were, is so large as to be incomprehensible even (perhaps especially) to the men who were actually involved. Laurence develops this theme--the Inadequacy of Memory--most effectively in The Diviners when Christie tries to describe, for Morag's benefit, his recollection of the Battle of Bourlon Wood. As if to preface his own account, Christie first reads aloud the official report as enshrined by military historians in The 60th Canadian Field Artillery Battery

Book. This sparse-worded, no-nonsense version is unencumbered by emotion and represents, perhaps, the closest proximity to the bare, factual truth (not completely free of qualification, however: it had to be filtered through the perspective of some writer). Christie's reaction is one of disdain: "Oh Jesus... don't they make it sound like a Sunday school picnic" (101)? His immediate need to retell the story testifies to his own sense of unfulfillment. The official version, so removed from what he remembers as his own, personal experience, offers little relevance in terms of the livid thing he most wants to communicate: that lonely horror and the pain of war, against which he attempts to plot the fabricated heroics of Colin Gunn, who was Morag's father. The facts and figures of the regimental account--representing just another one among countless perceptions--are most likely correct to the last digit and phrase, but Christie has either forgotten or discounted them. What is lacking for him there are those few but overwhelming emotions to which, over time, he has reduced the entire event. Christie's memories of violent death are not those cool bureaucratic musings in the Battery Book. In his version, bloody death takes centre stage. The man standing next to him, for instance, is not simply blown apart by a stray shell, he is "blown to smithereens," as Christie tells it: "A leg. A hand. Guts, which was that red and wet you would not credit it at all" (102). His is the exclusive memoryscape of "blood and slime and shit and horsepiss." He reads the Battery Book version with a mixture of wonder and hate, as if he cannot believe that it has anything to do with him. "It was like the book says," Christie tells Morag, "but it wasn't like that, also. That is the strangeness" (101). That 'strangeness' represents the editorial process that goes on, unconsciously, in the human mind as time and the needs of individuals progress. It is also the ultimate and unavoidable strangeness of narration as it relates to real life, representing the impossibility of exact and pure reflection. The words of the Battery Book do not do justice to the battle as it actually occurred, but then neither does Christie's version. Even in the grand historical sense, the Battery Book story, in its recollection of an obscure artillery brigade, is hardly relevant to the greater Battle of Cambrai, of which Bourlon Wood was a mere fragment. Historically speaking, accounts of Cambrai hardly touch on the blood-spattered moments of gunners such as Christie Logan, but

relate it, rather, as a story of tank warfare: the first successful employment of a massed armor offensive. Christie disappears in those grand annals of historical record, and one has to search, with a magnifying glass, the indexes of such books for any mention of Bourlon Wood. And yet in Christie's recollections is an equivalent ignorance of fact, for he will not remember the grand strategies of machines and men. In his mind, only the memories of the most immediate circumstances guaranteed their own longevity: the screaming shells, the death of friends, the shattered weeping of relatives. This ambiguity, this contradictory cross-reference is exactly what we would expect to find. The war, as a metaphor of life, is comprised of multitudinous perspectives. They cannot all be brought together in a single account, for to do so would be to reconstruct life: not merely to remember it well, but actually re-*create* it. Thus would Art transcend itself, for into the image in the mirror one would breathe real being. But this is, in Laurence's opinion, pure fantasy. "Writing," she says, "... is never as disorderly as life. Art, in fact, is never life. It is never as paradoxical, chaotic, complex or alive" ("Gadgetry" 83). It never represents the infinite totality of human perspective. In terms of an event like the Battle of Bourlon Wood, Christie's tale and the Battery Book never tell more than one side of the truth at a time. The *real* story--that which is life itself--is comprised of endless versions.

But beyond the expansive parameters of real life lies another, more malleable dimension, one not constricted by the demands of multitudinous perspective and therefore truly responsive to the needs of individuals. This is the realm of myth, in which history has graduated to a higher, more ethereal plane of being.

In the formation of myths, facts become ideals; lives become examples. Historical occurrences are then conceived as ideological touchpoints within a larger, perhaps global, framework of symbolic truths. Myth is sometimes propaganda; it can be a political tool. It takes the individual and fashions him into a symbol of the larger community. Myth is malleable and can serve conflicting interests simultaneously. It endures because it evolves, because it always remains the product of the alternating public will. On the part of individuals, myth adapts to individual need, for it exists unhindered by the laws of nature. Myth is never written in stone. These evolving properties make the coalescence

of myth and history an impossibility. "History seeks closure," writes a popular historian; "myth doesn't. No matter what history does to *close* the case, myth insists on re-opening it" (Hathorn, Holland 3). Myth, after all, does not exist for the sake of history, although it sometimes seems, especially in the Manawakan fiction, that the reverse is profoundly true. There is no doubt that in the case of Laurence's heroines, myths overshadow the facts. In any case, facts are static. One can do little with them. Myth, on the other hand, has the capacity to be thoroughly beneficial.

In the case of Manawakan protagonists (Currie, Cameron, MacLeod and Gunn), the primary myths, of course, are those of the Highland Scots. Like all myths, they spring from true historical events, including the Battle of Culloden in 1746, the subsequent, notorious Highland Clearances, and the establishment of Lord Selkirk's colony on the banks of the Red River. In the greater parameters of Manawaka, however, it must be noted that the Highlanders represent only one of several ancestral possibilities. The Métis myths are nearly as prominent (especially in The Diviners) and even Ukrainian heritage is indicated through the character of Nick Kazlik in A Jest of God. But within the context of Laurence's major women figures, there is no need to explore the other mythical sets, except where they overlap those of Highland origin (as in the case of the Métis tales of Riel against the Sutherlanders at Ft. Garry, for instance).

In the Highland myths is an inexhaustible, frequently anecdotal, reservoir of strength. They represent a kind of spiritual history peopled by heroes and saints. As myth, the valiant last-stand by clansmen on Drummossie Moor transcends its historical properties and becomes, as it were, frozen in time, yet infinitely accessible by those who would imagine it. The mythical image is not of Scottish irregulars cut down like dogs by the Duke of Cumberland's cannons while still hundreds of yards short of the British lines. In myth, the British are nearly imperceptible. They are a vague, faceless evil in the far distance. Myth turns defeat into victory, for the true valour and the most successful legacy of the battle remains enshrined in the Highlanders themselves. This is the image that Manawakans bear: tall, wild men, fierce and proud with claymores in hand. Last of a dying tribe, they are, by virtue of their own extinction, uncontestably glorious. For women -warriors in the Manawaka books, these mythical figures are

conductors of untempered fortitude, as Marian Engel has noted. She sees in the tales of the Piper Christie's attempts to make Morag strong, to infuse her with at least the principles by which the greatest Gunn was said to live. "Christie, above all people, understands the need for dreams," Engel writes, "he encourages... [those] that will lift her beyond... the common lot" (73). Likewise, Clara Thomas perceives the strength-infusing character of myth. In light of the binding *bildungsroman* quality that is so much a part of each Manawaka book, it is easy to see the importance of strength-development. Thomas writes, "the functions of myth have been to give...[Morag] strength to develop into her own person, to find her own place" ("Ossian" 62). The clansmen, as spiritual ancestors, pass down their wisdom in story (the tales told through families), poem (the written epics, like those ascribed to Ossian) and song (including the music of the pipes, the laments). Morag makes a joke of this inheritance, as she reads on a bottle of good scotch the directive of the Clan Grant, which is to "Stand Fast." She wonders, "didn't any of them ever have mottoes such as, let's say, *Take It Easy* or *God Rest Your Soul?* Nope. Stiffen the spine. Prepare to suffer, *but good*" (229).

These mottoes and ancient cries of war are found in that Manawakan Bible known as The Clans and Tartans of Scotland. Inside what David Blewett has named the "Manawaka Cycle," this miniature tome achieves canonical status. It is the dispenser of heritage and the index of virtue. The clans and their related septs are offered alphabetically to the seeker of ancestral pride. The book denies some (under Gunn, Morag finds a painful absence), distorts others (meek Rachel's war-cry [Cameron] is of gladiatorial ilk: "sons of the hounds come here and get flesh" [52]), but enlivens all (Hagar's cry, "Gainsay who dare," represents her capacity for rage, the strong battling spirit by which she endures). The Clans and Tartans is a virtual melting pot of Highland sentiment, a book of inspiration to which Manawakans can refer in times of trial or weightlessness. The Clans and Tartans is a grounding apparatus. It reminds people of who they are, where they have come from. It is also, at times, a kind of spiritual wish-list. The Manawaka books are filled with moments of dire need, and characters are often found longing to Stand Fast (Grant), to Conquer or Die (MacLaine), and--at all times--to Remain Unvanquished (Armstrong).

Laurence has endorsed Northrop Frye's vision of the Bible as the "Great Code" by which all things literary may be understood ("Final Hour" 262). This idea of a single source stretched out in embracing, universal reference is highly desirable. Perhaps in the Manawaka world there is a fragment of that great scholar's premise, for we find in the Clans and Tartans at least a lesser, though equally unifying, principle. The "Little Code" speaks to the subject of war, for the Highland legacy exists exclusively within the parameters of battle. The condensed records of clans are repetitive in their endless chronicles of conflict. In these histories, the power of chiefs is absolute and the right of the sword holds sway. The spirits of Manawakan ancestors are tempered with steel. Their invocations are to fight, at all costs, to never surrender. This message, received by every Laurencian protagonist, is most clearly demonstrated by Vanessa MacLeod. At first, she dismisses the Clans and Tartans as being "too boring to read" (Bird 50). In this juvenile, rebellious rejection of Highland heritage are echoes of John Shipley, Hagar's son in The Stone Angel, who so callously traded the Clanranald MacDonald brooch for a knife belonging to Lazarus Tonnerre (the same knife and brooch, emblematic of Highland and Métis myth, that pass through Christie and Lazarus to Morag and Jules in The Diviners). Like John, Vanessa denies what she has been given out of spite for a parental figure--Grandmother MacLeod--only in Vanessa's case, the denial proves ultimately superficial. She reveals the retention of her ancestral reverence in all its warlike glory upon discovering an opportunity to take revenge on the bullying, "bad kid" of her youth: Harvey Shinwell. In the most poignant moment of the short story, "The Half Husky," Vanessa's blood surges with pure tartanic rage: "I felt like shouting some Highland war cry, or perhaps whistling the MacLeod's praise (battle music)" (154). The book from which these war cries have been raised was obviously *not* so boring, after all. Vanessa contradicts herself, but in Manawaka, her sort of initial denial is always a part of ancestral appropriation. The journey to meaningful heritage is necessarily circular, bending, first, far away, then back again. Vanessa's own journey is somewhat accelerated to meet the needs of the story itself, but in her adoption of battle-mindedness she is linked to her sister Manawakans. Her need to sound the war-cry is highly reminiscent of Hagar, who is, even at an early age, far more war-like than

either of her brothers. In light of this, her dynasticly-motivated father, the stoic Jason Currie, wisely makes Hagar the guardian of his ancestor's fiery resolve. Hagar is, after all, the inheritor of Jason's pride. When, following a beating, she refuses to cry, Hagar's father recognizes the open manifestation of himself. "You take after me," he admits, "You've got backbone. I'll give you that" (Stone 10). Not surprisingly then, it is young Hagar who demonstrates the proper delivery of that phrase roared by MacDonalds in war: "Gainsay who dare!" There is in Hagar's fierce and furious delivery the indication of a deep, developing battle-consciousness. "And I who loved that cry," she recalls, "... would shout it out with such ferocity that the boys snickered until our father impaled them with a frown" (15). This, of course, is the very cry that resurfaces near the conclusion of The Diviners as Morag and Jules trade the mythic emblems of their respective pasts. When Morag reads on the surface of the silver brooch Hagar's engraved and much-loved exposition, she immediately recognizes the mythic validity it holds for her. Morag does not care how these potent words have come to her, only that she has been allowed to see them by the grace of beneficial fate "and will not deny what she has been given" (458). Having lived through a lifetime of battling herself, Morag knows what it means to stand tall in the spirit of Hagar's clan. And, having grown up without an "official" Highland heritage of her own, Morag gratefully appropriates what belongs to the silver pin. As David Williams has noted, there is in this moment of adoption an even deeper symbolic message, for Hagar's transplanted clan is "none other than that of 'young Archie MacDonald,' the man who led the historical March from the north (Churchill, on Hudson's Bay) to... Red River" (Blewett 323). That particular MacDonald was an actual historical figure upon whom the tales of the mythical Piper Gunn were loosely based. Laurence sets fact and fiction side by side, reminding us of her own affinity for the coalescence of history and myth. Referring to W. L. Morton, the historian she most admires, Laurence recognizes the existing similarities between his work and the novelist's (Thomas, "Ossian" 64). Though neither writes exclusively from fact or fiction, their parallel task is always the fusing of these equidistant aspects of reality. Morag does this as she gathers the myths of Christie, Jules and Catherine Parr Traill, and it is the basis of her statement to Ella: "I like the thought of

history and fiction interweaving" (444). Subjection to historical scrutiny tends to deracinate the myths of Piper Gunn, but Morag recognizes the factual gap and decides that it doesn't matter. For even though Piper Gunn never lived, the degree of human truth to which his story of suffering speaks is profound. In that relativity is the pure essence of myth: not whether it be actual truth, or even that it *should* be true, but that it is somehow truer than truth itself. In this vein of thought, Morag forgives historical non-occurrences with reference to emotive communication. Though Christie says, for example, that the Sutherlanders walked a thousand miles from their disembarkment on the frozen shores of the Bay when it was *really* only one hundred and fifty, Morag notes that "it must have *felt* like a thousand" (443 italics mine). What counts, in the telling of myths, is emotive communication, for such information is the kind that endures. This quality of mythic language allows for sincere transcendence, even across cultures as widely separated as those of Morag and Jules. The Métis legends of the "Rider" ("one Tonnerre they call *Chevalier,* and no man can ride like him and he is one helluva shot" [Diviners 84]) are, of course, comparable to those of Piper Gunn. The equivalent lack of historical evidence is reconciled by emotive power. Morag discovers that the Rider is really an amalgam of Cree legend and Gabriel Dumont, but she comes to the conclusion that past archival Tonnerres "had a right to borrow" (444) from these other sources. The main duty of myth--that soulful communication--is satisfied generously by Métis and Highlander alike. Strength, wrapped in this cocoon of story, represents the best qualities of inheritance.

2. State of Siege

At the outset of a paper entitled "My Final Hour," Laurence promises the revelation to a breathless world of "the wisdom of... [her] accumulated years" (251). Such wisdom, she claims, represents the sole yet solid certainty of a mind ravaged by exponentially increasing ignorance. The humility of this admission represents not self-effacement (Laurence is always suspicious of martyrs) but a necessary recognition of human limitation. Such insight is a!most always the fringe benefit of passing years. Unqualified hope, definitive wisdom and notions of immortality are the temporary qualities of youth. Humility, like fine wine,

improves with age and is always worth the wait. Christie reveals his own recognition of this in a conversation with thirtyish Morag in the aftermath of Prin's funeral. "Well, you're young, " he says, "You know a whole lot [now] you won't know later on" (Diviners 271).

But the benefit of recognized ignorance is the firm, conscious acceptance of those few things one *does* know, those pieces of human wisdom that are as true as they are applicable. In "My Final Hour," which is, for the most part, a cry against the inhumanity of nuclear arsenals, Laurence offers the two great revelations of her own life: that (1) human life is invariably lived in a state of siege under threat of violence and degradation and that (2), while it is often impossible to be *optimistic* in the face of inimical global grief, one must never despair or surrender life (through an act of suicide) no matter how bad the situation becomes. To this end, Laurence cites from the most poignant moment of "The Battle of Maldon" the thane Brythwold's famous last words: *Heart must be the harder, mind the mightier, courage must be the greater as our strength diminishes* . This Old English lesson in tenacity is one in which Laurence perceives a wellspring of true strength. And yet the source itself might be considered a rather curious choice of support for the thematic continuity of battle: the prolongation of that struggle which is life. In ancient verse, Brythwold and his comrades stand on the very edge of violent death at the hands of Viking invaders, and, though the poem itself does not go on to describe it, their defeat is imminent. If one is to take it literally, the message itself is rather contradictory: defying, rather than strengthening, hope since Brythwold himself has no chance to survive, however strong his mind, courage and heart may be. Perhaps, under the aegis of nuclear potential, Laurence felt the violent death of Earth and humanity to be equally unavoidable. Certainly, in the context of her Manawaka novels, all of which include at least some reference to an apocalyptic war, it would not be difficult to make a case for doomsaying. The Fire-Dwellers, for instance, by far Laurence's most pessimistic book, is teeming with nuclear anxiety. Stacey can hardly gaze upon the city skyline without a shudder of prophetic fear, seeing it not for what it is, but for what it could become: "charred, open to the impersonal winds, glass and steel broken like vulnerable live bones, shadows of people frog-splayed like in that other city" (8-9). The other

city--Hiroshima-- appears again near the end of the book, as Stacey mock-marches in a peace parade in order to seek Luke, her temporary lover. Rachel too, in A Jest of God, fears for that war that will end all others, yet in her case the vision of Armageddon is a twisted scenario of love, a typically Rachel-like impossibility. Her dream-life with Nick, dated from the end of the world, involves a secluded place in the deepest woods, a place so isolated that even atomic radiation will never penetrate it. But it is her description of the final war that most speaks to the desperation of her own anxieties, for the apocalypse appears to be a foregone conclusion, lacking only the subtle movements of Time to bring it off. She and Nick will run away when "the one *inevitable* hysterical moron yields to the seduction of knobs and dials or whatever in hell they are, and the cities are scorched to perdition" (145 italics mine). It is that aspect of inevitability that speaks the loudest. Something of it may lie behind Laurence's own experience of a youthful hope receding with advancing years.

"Perhaps I no longer believe... in the Promised Land," Laurence writes, "even the Promised Land of one's own freedom" ("Ten Years'" 14). Freedom in the nuclear age is a peripheral concern, for to make it the central focus of a work one would have to take for granted that other colossal theme--survival--without which the potential for human action becomes meaningless. The optimist assumes his survival to be a matter of course, but this easy ideological comfort was denied to Laurence and her generation, "the first in human history to come into young adulthood knowing that the human race... had the dreadful ability to destroy all life on earth" ("Final Hour" 252). Survival, within the context of a nuclear war, is, of course an impossibility or else a glitzy piece of propaganda from the authorities who surely know better. "Civil defence plans are a sham," Laurence warns, "In a nuclear war there would be nowhere to hide" ("Final Hour" 255). And so, on the civil defence form her son brings home from school, Stacey Cameron cynically answers the request for an emergency contact. The school requires some third party of support just in case--following the first salvo of enemy missiles--she and Mac were to become 'Unavailable.' "Stacey had written: *Name:* God. *Address:* Heaven" (Fire 56). This scene, as Laurence admits in the short film, *A Writer in the Nuclear Age,* stems directly from her own past. Ian's defence form is a literary echo from the life of the

author's daughter, Jocylyn, who once presented to her mother a similar document of bureaucratic insult. "Next of kin indeed," Laurence sneers, "as if *anyone* on this Earth could be found."

Stacey's stark but pragmatic philosophy is, as a sci-fi afficionado like Laurence would be happy to see, also the theme of Isaac Asimov's famous short story (he himself has called it the greatest science fiction story ever) "The Final Question." There, as two computer technicians grapple with the impossibility of reversing entropy (a measure of the degradation of the universe), the possibility of humans harnessing the power of another sun, following the exhaustion of their own, is raised. But such strategy is fundamentally flawed, as one of the characters metaphorically explains. It's "like the guy in the story who was caught in a sudden shower and who ran to a grove of trees and got under one. He wasn't worried, you see, because he figured when one tree got wet through, he would just get under another one" (179). But the trees soak through at the same time, at the same rate. Likewise, when Stacey and Mac are obliterated by the bomb, Ian, the school and all life will be obliterated too. The protection of one tree is unreliable. Only in the reversal of the rain itself can there be any cause for hope.

In the Book of Job is a promise of continuity which Morag, like Laurence, feels compelled to reject. God assures his servant that *one generation passeth and another generation cometh, but the earth endureth forever.* "That does not any longer strike me as self evident," Morag decides, "I am deficient in faith" (186). In this narrow context, faith is that dismissive quality of youth or ignorance that allows one to ignore the global tragedy of arms: the potential for the Earth's destruction. Such optimism flourishes only behind eyes shut tight against the realities of a violent society. Morag, like all of us, is sometimes paralyzed by the wanton human capacity for destruction and yet continues to find her voice and the will to use it in her novels. In Morag's case, the employment of words represents her deep and hopeful desire to survive, for in surviving is the innate and self-propelling belief in joy. Any artist--writer, poet or painter--dedicated to prolonging humanity by enshrining its fragments in eternal mediums is necessarily empowered by an immensity of personal faith: a belief in the fundamental potential of mankind. The struggle to survive, whether on a personal or global level, is founded on the basic

premise that one's life, or the life of the human race, is *worth* preserving. The act of survival is, in fact, an affirmation of human worthiness. Paradoxically, considering the potential for nuclear disaster, the greatest enemy of mankind is none other than Man himself. But in such an uncertain world, one's overwhelming and all-consuming task is the preservation of personal belief and admiration of fragmented human virtue. Despair, that most terrible of sins, must never be admitted, and yet the denial of despair is a life-long conflict. Hope is not a passive state; one must struggle every minute to maintain it. Humanitarian faith is almost a contradiction in terms, for one is forced to painfully reconcile it with the daily atrocities of human existence: bloody war, for instance, and poverty and violent crime. In the face of these various *in* humanities, Laurence's message remains constant. In Hagar's voice is the invocation to resist: " *flail against the thing* " (95). In this vein, in the course of a Convocation address at York University, Laurence declares her fondest wish:

> I hope…[my generation is] passing on to you, even in the midst of a terrifying world, some sense of hope, some sense that these lifelong struggles are worthwhile because life itself is worthwhile, and is given to each of us for a short time--to protect, to honour and to celebrate. (Dance, 283)

To honour, protect and celebrate life: Man knows no greater responsibility. This realization is also the gained wisdom of Hagar's epiphanic moment near the end of the Stone Angel, in which she is finally brought, by way of Mr. Troy's hymn--*All People That On Earth Do Dwell* --to the recognition of her greatest regret.

> This knowing comes upon me so forcefully, so shatteringly, and with such bitterness as I have never felt before. I must always, always, have wanted that--simply to rejoice. How is it I never could?… How long have I known? (292)

Laurence's conception of survival is clearly two-dimensional. Global concerns--threats of nuclear obliteration--comprise the larger and more pressing of the two. Apocalyptic fear tends to be a collective, rather than individual phenomenon, but its influence does stretch to the lives of individuals on occasion, as in the case

of Stacey Cameron. But while Laurence herself was clearly motivated to a large degree by the generic anti-nuclear campaign, her characters are, for the most part, affected only peripherally by anxieties of global death. Instead, survival, in the context of Manawakans, is largely understood within the parameters of that other dimensional state: the struggle of the individual to retain her own identity, power and faith in the future. These are the crucial qualities of agency for which every Manawakan heroine yearns. But such women quickly discover that desire is not enough. The external world loathes personal autonomy and obstructs, at every opportunity, those attempting to develop it. Laurence's protagonists exist in a state of siege, engaged in desperate, defensive wars for the sake of survival. To survive, in this context, is to retain one's own freedom of action and thought despite the aggressive efforts of others to subject them. The external foes in this war are not exclusively other human individuals either, but include also the oppressive and damaging *ideals* of society in general: racism, sexism and economic class-consciousness. Morag, for example, who hails from the wrong side of the tracks, battles the derisive attitudes of the well-bred, the moneyed Presbyterians, who, sensing their own superiority, feel well within their rights to pass judgement. At Simloe's Ladies' Wear, the stately and slightly ridiculous Mrs. Cameron graces Morag with condescending phrase: "You've smartened yourself up a whole lot" (128), says the undertaker's wife. In a single breath, she manages to attack from opposite directions by implying both the general disapproval of the state of Christie and Prin (from which Morag has presumably improved) and the ground that remains to be covered (Morag may have 'smartened up' but she will never quite equal Mrs. Cameron). Stacey Cameron, who is Morag's age, senses her mother's pointed snobbery and is deeply shamed. Neither is Mrs. Cameron unaware of her *faux pas* . Her subsequent attempt to gloss it over with "a tiny girlish laugh" is as ineffective as it is obscene. Subtlety, after all, is the only thing that makes condescension acceptable, but in this instance Mrs. Cameron has unwittingly overstepped the boundary. Of course in the final analysis, because of the disparity of their respective social positions, Morag's true feelings are of little consequence. Mrs. Cameron will always be free simply to trip gaily away with, perhaps, a another droll story for the girls of the bridge club.

Morag, on the other hand, must never genuinely react. She allows herself internal malice and an inward, mocking smile, but that is all. Mrs. Cameron represents a portion of those wordly forces aligned against her. Morag's repression of violent outburst (which would have lost her the beloved position at Simloe's) and her resolve to rise above it all are the physical manifestations of her battle to survive. Mrs. Cameron, unconsciously no doubt, would rather mould Morag into a pretty but vacuous shop girl from whom she might glean future service. This is as much as Mrs. Cameron believes Morag can ever be. Everlasting defeat, on Morag's side, would involve the acceptance of such denigrating appraisal. A true survivor, Morag simply grits her teeth. Thoughts of revenge, if there are any, seethe inwardly. Morag cannot afford to destroy herself. Tomorrow is another day in Manawaka, and she must live it.

The watchword of the survivor is resilience. The tender seeds of independence are planted with care within the soul, and so it is the duty of the survivor to be impenetrable, to take the blows of enemies on the chin, as it were, so that the fragile inner harvest may continue unabated. Laurence's psychological wars are waged by her protagonists for the sake of self-defence, and life is often described in predatory terms, as an eternal, arduous purgatory designed to wear the defences down. This theme of tortuous living is prominent in the Manawaka books. When, for instance, Mr. Troy suggests to Hagar that "life must have been quite difficult" when she was young, Hagar replies: "Yes, yes, it was. But only because it cannot be otherwise, at whatever time" (Stone 41). Brooke Skelton's (Morag's husband's) comprehension of life is equally despondent. Though he would have preferred, more than anything, to run a tea plantation in India, he is shackled to a job to which he can no longer attribute happiness. "That's terribly sad," Morag says. "*It's the human condition* ," Brooke replies; "There's nothing you can do about it" (Diviners 246 italics mine). Sadness and struggle do not merely permeate these lives: they are the dominant qualities of life itself and the beacons of life-long war. All together, they comprise the red-orange glow that is Stacey Cameron, seen from a distance. David Blewett has written of the purgatorial aspects of The Fire-Dwellers, seeing, in the symbolic flames, "Stacey's hellfire existence in which everything burns with tormenting fires: her lust, her alcoholism, visions of destruction

and death, and the city itself" (37). 'Dwelling in fire' describes, to varying degrees, the states of every Manawakan protagonist. The flames represent the brutalities of adversaries--Mrs. Cameron and others--and their attempts to defile the sacred, inner sanctuaries of developing independence. In lives marred by uncertainty and the fluctuations of Fate, hostility alone can be depended upon to endure. The state of siege is eternal, though sometimes punctuated by brief release. Survival depends on arduous wars: "those within the individual human being, [and] those concealed but sometimes deadly ones that can occur within a family" ("Books" 249). In the warrior's heart is the determination to endure and the iron-clad resolve to never surrender, no matter what occurs.

Bruce Stovel has recognized the important thematic features of battle in A Bird in the House. He has seen that through the consistency of its employment, war as a theme tends to connect and breathe life into the stories of the collection (131). This is an accurate observation which, taken in the context of Laurence's admission that A Bird in the House was "the only semi-autobiographical fiction... [she] had ever written," serves to alert the reader to the broader employment of war throughout the rest of her work. War, as we have seen, represents the struggle of the individual to survive. Warriors are those who have committed themselves to the fight, those who are determined to resist surrender at all costs.

Physical images and the language of battle thrive in the Manawaka works. The five warriors of the prairie town are born into and carry with them the literal, metaphorical and physical frameworks of battle. In the "Sound of the Singing," for instance, the first story from A Bird in the House, Laurence initiates her battle theme by comparing Grandfather Connor's house to "some crusader's embattled fortress" (11). The idea of a holy war, or of Vanessa as embarked on some kind of heroic quest, is carried, in varying degrees of reference, through to the very last story of the collection, "Jericho's Brick Battlements." The battlements refer, at least outwardly, to Grandfather Connor's imposing brick domain, and yet, paradoxically, the foreshadowed collapse of walls point to Vanessa, not the old man. When she is forced, in the final few lines of the collection, to acknowledge her heritage as stemming from Grandfather himself, Vanessa's defences are overrun. This is a defeat of sorts, and yet Laurence would have regarded it as an

inevitable one. Like all Manawakans, Vanessa was wrong to think she could ignore the past by relying on geographic distance. In the context of the warrior caste, however, this 'surrender' is incidental. In an analysis of the composition of the generic Laurencian warrior herself, it is the language of battle--the images of Joshua's Jericho and the embattled crusaders--that is paramount. Laurence's violent syntax is the external shell of war, an indicator of the inner struggle that rages in the hearts of even those who seem the most meek. Neepawa (and by extension, Manawaka), the prairie town of Laurence's youth, has been described by her as "Belsen, writ small but with the same ink" (Heart 241). This is not a literal equation of course, but merely an indication of the potential for (in this case) evil which exists in every place and in every human soul. Manawaka is neither dull nor inert as a result of its smallness, but is, rather, extraordinary for the diversity of its inhabitants. Laurence denies the existence of 'ordinary' people, claiming that each individual, in the context of her uniqueness, cannot help being extraordinary, the storing-place of incredible and original experience. In the context of internal war, no one is exempt, and therefore each individual is forced to fight, with, of course, varying degrees of success. Laurence's heroines are often praised for being 'ordinary' and down to earth. Such appraisals represent both a blessing and a curse for purveyors of the 'realist' medium. Being 'down to earth,' one is not necessarily banal, and yet this is often the accompanying perception. Manawakan heroines are not the products of popular fame (with the vague exception of Morag, perhaps, who becomes a somewhat recognized novelist), but they are not cardboard commonalities either. The extraordinary nature of their 'common' state extends to the whole of their experience as well. Thus, just as Manawaka is Belsen writ small, the small wars of Manawakans, those struggles for personal power, are equally of grandiose quality. Vanessa's battle is Israel's in the land of Canaan; Morag's war with Mrs. Cameron is Wellington's Waterloo; Rachel finds her victory at the doorway to Hector's chapel, and her moment is not unlike Cumberland's on the bloody ground at Culloden. These women taste the pain and fear and victory of the psychological war that is a reflection of the physical world. In the physical world, the innocent son of Mrs. Bass is gunned down in the streets of Detroit, and women and children are bombed in Vietnam. In the

psychological, Manawakan world, the person known as Stacey Cameron is being slowly erased under the tremendous pressure of children, booze, lost dreams and poisonous love. In the psychological world of war, Morag keeps her silence in the face of Mrs. Cameron's attack. The silence wounds her deeply; she can hardly bear the shame and degradation that surrounds it. To save herself, she must fight to hold her tongue. It is only later, once she has begun to write, that she hones her own voice into the defensive weapon she needs. Through careful examination, one soon realizes that these two worlds are parallel dimensions of being. That which Laurence labels "spiritual violence" (Lennox 63) is the dimensional equivalent of the savage nature of physical human war. These modes of violence are comparable and even, at times, overlapping. Those virtues that Laurence recognized in the historical wars of her favorite underdogs--the Sayyid, Dumont, and the Highland Clans--she has, in effect, transplanted in her books for the women characters (who have no access to physical war) to discover. The arenas of Laurencian conflict are generally those of the mind and spirit; however they are often constructed or at least pointed to by obvious battle metaphors and the language of war to which she, as the inheritor of a grand battle tradition (that of Highlanders, Métis and the survivors of the World Wars), could not help but be accustomed.

The recognizable language of war surfaces, for instance, in A Bird in the House as Vanessa approaches the dwelling-place of her nemesis, Grandfather Connor. The battlefield is prefaced by obvious allusions to war, from the comparison of the brick house to "some crusader's fortress" to the military flower arrangement of the garden "where helmeted snapdragon stood in precision" (Bird 11). The resulting image in the reader's mind is one of war-like preparation with the drawbridge raised and the defenders waiting with grim faces along the craggy walls. In this snapshot of war is the seed of Vanessa's own momentary consciousness and anticipation as she approaches the brick house. She certainly comes prepared for battle, knowing, by experience, how she will need to fight her grandfather on behalf of herself and the other members of her family. As part of her preparation, we see Vanessa stomping on an anthill, which is, itself, described as a castle, while chanting what must surely be deemed her war-cry: "Step on a crack, break your grandfather's back" (13).

Vanessa's immediate environment is of war-like proportions designed to magnify for the reader the state of her own mind. Laurence employs a multitude of common battle images to relay the bitter struggles that rage within her characters. The blaring proclamations of war (as attributed to Jericho), the war-cries of Highland clans and the head-spinning fury of violent release represent some of the external indications of psychological war. But in viewing them all together--metaphors, images and physical symptoms alike--the prominence of a certain image of war cannot be denied. This far-dominant image is that of the fortress, the enclosed, sacred space, the safety-barricade. The dominance of the fortress imagery is consistent with Laurence's own perception of preferential warfare: that is to say, the wars of self-defence. As warriors, the Manawakan heroines generally exist in a state of siege, rather than aggression. They are assaulted from without, and the main battles of their lives are fought to preserve, rather than conquer, the desirable characterisics and aspects of their own lives. They live within fortresses for there is no other way to survive. Sometimes Laurence's protagonists are afraid to find out what happens beyond their protected spaces, as if by ignoring the outer world they can save themselves and their children from its often malignant touch. The fortress is a microcosm of reality, a self-contained world of specific pain and single triumphs. Stacey Cameron, for instance, is loathe to cross the threshold into further suffering, into external pain that can only compound her own. She cannot spare any sympathy or concern for the death of Peter Challoner for example, Ian's classmate who is run over by a car, even though she has personally witnessed it. "It's all I can do to cope with what goes on inside these four walls," she thinks, "[inside] this fortress, which I like to believe strong" (Fire 12). The onslaught of adversaries is never-ending, as we have seen. The only successful survivors are those who have battened the hatches, as it were, and committed themselves for the long seige.

Specific examples of fortress-imagery are easily discovered in the Manawaka works. In A Jest of God, for example, we are introduced to Rachel's home as an impenetrable enclosure: "Around our place the spruce trees still stand," she says; "No other trees are so darkly sheltering, shutting out prying eyes or the sun in summer, the spearheads of them taller than the houses" (19). The description of tree-tops as spearheads further enhances the battle-

readiness of Rachel behind her walls, ready to repel any attempt that might be made to breach them. This isolation, especially considering the willful denial of sunlight (representing enlightenment both in terms of the larger human society beyond Manawaka and the carnal sexual knowledge she will discover in Nick) is, in part, a negative image too, for, in protecting herself, Rachel cannot help but promote her own exclusion from the world she longs to touch. Such is always the drawback of excessive self-protection, though it is, perhaps, greatly enhanced in Rachel's case. Before the introduction of her home, Rachel is seen staring wistfully from the window of her classroom. From the playground below the chanting of skipping children drifts up and eases her into a fantasy of "little Roman girls safe inside some villa in Gaul or Britain... not knowing the blue-faced dogmen were snarling outside the walls, stealthily learning" (8). In a strange reversal of roles, Rachel illustrates the worst danger of living behind walls, however safe. The daughters of centurions represent Rachel's own situation in Manawaka, for, though it is she who goes on chanting the same songs year after year, only her students benefit from them by gaining the knowledge they need to move on, away from her. Like the dogmen, her students--her temporary children--are always in the process of progression and, eventually, conquest.

Hagar's fortress was once her house before she lost it to Marvin and his "stealthy currency" of ongoing maintenance and repair. She found another at Shadow Point, though: the terminus of her Exodic flight. The cannery is a stronghold: far-removed and hard to approach. Without its own water supply, however, it lacks the prerequisite qualities for resistance in the event of a conventional siege, a shortcoming Hagar herself is quick to realize. "What would a fortress be without a well?" (153) she asks, indicating the certainty of her own need for renewed protection. In the end, however, the cannery proves to be more than adequate. She seeks a spiritual sanctuary, really, and by removing herself from Marvin and Doris, Hagar finds the solace of personal space and--what proves to be temporary--freedom. When she finally settles in, Hagar is graced with a profound sense of peace: "Up here I feel somehow more barricaded," she says, "safer" (155). Also, one must not overlook Hagar's Highland connection in this respect, for the crest of the Clanranald MacDonald depicts a triple-towered castle with the inscription: *My hope is constant in thee* (Bain 162). In

Hagar's case, hope is likewise grounded in her castle, for it is only there, within its sacred walls, that she may embark on the spiritual journey of retribution and forgiveness in her reunion with John (through the intervention of Murray Lees) and the admission of her own oppressive and self-destructive guilt.

Hagar's need for a castle-stronghold reinforces the predominantly self-defensive qualities of the wars she wages. Defensive concerns are common to all Manawakan protagonists, for the world forces them to look to their own protection. Laurence illustrates this somewhat paranoid quality of life in the short story, "The Mask of the Bear," in which Vanessa's extended family gathers on the occasion of Grandmother Connor's funeral. Uncle Terrence speaks of what was probably Grandfather Connor's greatest burden: the oppression of living (unworthily) with the angelic woman who was his wife, a malignant tension he could only relieve with anger. "Everybody to his own shield in this family" (Bird 86), Terrence says, and, by extension, his sage advice applies to the giant family that is Manawaka, too. In that prairie town, self-defence is a way of life, a way of *sustaining* one's life, as it were. Rachel perceives it in the microcosm of her own classroom, in the complex politics of grade school, in which an individual's scarcest trace of originality or favour can draw the unbridled hatred of the collective. With this in mind, she is careful to protect her favorite student, James, from her own fatal praise. His drawings of spaceships, infused with vibrant life, she calls *splendid,* but then is forced to cheapen the compliment by randomly doling it out in respect to the artistic efforts of others as well, however banal. The children must not sense her favor or they will fall on James like demons. In such an aggressive world it is best to keep one's mouth shut.

The children themselves are in fact tools of self-defence as Rachel herself observes in the behavior of her student's mothers. "They think they are making a shelter for their children," she decides, "but actually it is the children who are making a shelter for them" (56). This is Rachel's predicament as well, although she is generally unaware of it. Occasionally, she too falls into Calla's trap of using the term "my children" in reference to her own students. The passing of years and groups of students represent Rachel's worst defensive breech. The children from whom she cannot help but glean security are not reliable ultimately: the

protectors are temporary and never truly hers. In the summers she is abandoned and they don't know her anymore. And in her occasional chance meetings with grade two's from a former age, they--"Venusians ...from another planet" (18)-- stand as testaments to Rachel's isolation. Unlike her sister, Stacey, Rachel actually *craves* the continuity of family life. The biblical Rachel, as Atwood has noted, is drawn not from Genesis but from the book of Jerimiah (Atwood "Afterword" 212): "Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children because they were not" (Jer. 31:15). Laurence's Rachel seeks the comfort of responsible purpose and the inherent security of motherhood, which she (somewhat naively) perceives in the lives of her sister and others. But through her biblical namesake (and indeed, in related events of the novel: her sexual awakening, the benign growth, which perhaps foreshadows a living kind, and her cataclysmic escape to the west) Laurence embeds for Rachel an embryo of hope for the animation of her fondest wish. Biblically, the story of Rachel is a promise of consolation, divine favor and joy, of "a restoration of the Old Northern Kingdom of Israel, overrun a century earlier by the Assyrians, who dispersed the population" (Mays 634). Rachel Cameron, by travelling west, is, in a sense, coming home, for it is there that she hopes to discover the life she craves and the security she absolutely requires. "Thus saith the LORD: Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded... that thy children shall come again to their own border" (Jer. 31:15).

3. Warriors

Until now, the analysis of this paper has been concerned solely with Laurence's conception of war and the warrior *milieu* : the *background* or environment from which Manawakan combatants have emerged. But at this point, the central question remains to be addressed. What comprises the warrior seed itself? What elements merge within Laurence's warrior-soul?

Judging Laurence solely from the standpoint of her non-fictional work, the prototypical warrior is, as we have seen, a contradiction in terms. Considering the flagrant hatred of violence and conflict evident in her memoirs and in her publications in support of the anti-nuclear campaign, one could easily conclude

that the warrior-soul claims no virtue in her opinion. Yet this attitude, as we have seen in regard to the histories of Dumont and Mahammed' Abdille Hasan, is at times discounted or at least conveniently set aside, for she grants to these practitioners of violent war the highest praise for their honor, courage and nobility. But the politics of writers are, as a rule, often contradictory and of questionable ilk (one thinks of Graham Greene, for instance). Laurence herself admits an inability to embed successful manifestoes in her fiction: "Artists cannot really write... what I would call didactic prose," she has said to Terry Nash; "I cannot write novels that preach, but what I *can* do is to affirm my whole life-view through the characters in my books" (*A Writer).* Certainly, that is where she speaks with the most power, and that is, therefore, the place to which we must look to understand her true perception of the warrior-heart.

Shakespeare created a most offensive literary vision of the warrior in his depiction of the staff officer who makes a brief appearance in Henry IV, Part I. As the broken, wasted bodies of young men are dragged from Holmedon field, this untouched, flowery person of nobility, "fresh as a bridegroom," makes the blood of Hotspur boil: "As the soldiers bore dead bodies by," Hotspur recalls, "He called them untaught knaves, unmannerly/ To bring a slovenly unhandsome corse/ Betwixt the wind and his nobility" (I, iii, 33-45). In this scene we encounter a powerful anti-war message that speaks to the impossibility of romance (as enshrined in the pretty officer) in the presence of violent death. The staff officer is an easy ideal to despise because of the stark contrast of the states which he represents. The romance of war, as determined by Tennyson, Scott, Henry Newbolt and others, is palatable only in the absence of the results of war itself: the broken bodies, the spilled blood, the stench of death. Surely it is this obscenity of romance against which Laurence rages in regard to the poetic words of her father's Battery Book, for instance. The painful naivety of men believing that "perhaps a higher civilization can be built upon the old," men who cannot perceive the inexhaustible demands of violent humanity, but see instead "a light upon the horizon which is not the light of bursting shells" (Dance 31), wrenches Laurence's heart. The old war simply predicated the new, and the cycle, as Laurence perceives it, can only continue. That is the real tragedy of unmitigated hope and the painful legacy

of romantic perception. War is not like *The Charge of the Light Brigade* , and neither is it concluded just because the guns have ceased to fire. What separates hateful romance from the realist's treatment of war is the inclusion of the aftermath: the dead and the dying littering the field. But the war doesn't end there, either. To truly depict its effects, the seeing eye must turn to the families of the vanquished also, to the bereaved and the deprived, to those who wail but find no comfort.

In the short story, "Setting Our House in Order," Vanessa MacLeod's uncle Roddie, who was killed at the Somme, is transformed into a hollow figure of romance for the sake of his mother. Ewen (Vanessa's father) is shackled with guilt because he could not prevent his younger brother's death. Because he could not protect Roddie he tries to protect his mother instead by feeding her romance, as opposed to truth, concerning Roddie's death. Grandmother MacLeod, who proudly claims direct lineage from the lairds of Morven and the Constables of the Castle of Kinlochaline, finds a kind of solace in the notion of a hero's death for her son. This is directly parallel to the significance she attaches to her Highland heritage, for both, ultimately, prove practically irrelevant to her own life, if not utterly untrue. "Castle, my foot," Aunt Edna tells Vanessa; "She was born in Ontario, just like your Grandfather Connor, and her father was a horse doctor" (52). Her ties to any clan are, at best, faintly nostalgic; at worst, delusions of grandeur. Yet Grandmother MacLeod, as Clara Thomas notes, insists on living backwards, and "romanticizes the remote ancestral past to the considerable damage of those who are living in the present" (Manawaka 100). Ewen is forced to lie because of her and then, later, to hate himself for lying. His pain is most apparent when he tries to explain to his wife Beth why the romanticized version of Roddie's death was ever necessary. The lie made him angry and "terribly ashamed," as if by the telling he had cheapened, rather than built upon, the memory of his brother. "I had to write *something* to her," he said, "but men don't really die like that, Beth. It wasn't that way at all" (59). Grandmother MacLeod would rather believe they did. For even when Ewen denies the lie to her face, she will not be moved an inch. Following her insistence that the new-born grandson be named Roderick to honour the dead, Ewen cannot restrain his contempt.

> 'Rhoderick Dhu!' he cried, 'That's what you'll call him, isn't it? Black Rhoderick, like before…. As though he were a character out of Sir Walter Scott instead of an ordinary kid who--'
>
> He broke off, and looked at her with a kind of desolation in his face.
>
> 'God I'm sorry, Mother,' he said. 'I had no right to say that.'
>
> Grandmother MacLeod did not flinch, or tremble, or indicate that she felt anything at all.
>
> 'I accept your apology, Ewen,' she said. (58)

Grandmother MacLeod's advocacy of romance poses a direct threat to the well-being of her own family who must continually suffer to maintain her delusions. The suffering is physically, emotionally, and even financially grounded, as evidenced by Edna's horror on learning that Grandmother MacLeod is perusing the catalogue from Robinson & Cleaver again, when, in the real world, the household can barely keep itself above water as it is. "Your grandmother was interested in being a lady," Ewen tells Vanessa, "and for a long time it seemed to her that she really was one" (55). Ladies, like heroes, are expensive façades to maintain. Eventually, they are too expensive for anyone.

Though Laurence has spoken fondly of Homeric notions in respect to the Sayyid and others, she does, for the most part, seem to genuinely refute them in her fiction, at least in as far as her women warriors are concerned. The five protagonists share a general hatred of war and violence, as well as a consensual disillusionment with the political causes and/or results of wars past. Since the chronology of the Manawaka fiction encompasses both World Wars, Laurence's characters are unavoidably touched by them in the most personal ways. Classmates, fathers, uncles and brothers of Manawakan women are sent to war, but they do not return unchanged. Through the experience they are transformed and given demons to bear until they die. Stacey and Rachel's father Nial was once--unbelievably--young and vibrant and "awkwardly proud...in his new uniform as Private in the artillery" (Jest 105), but returns from the slaughter of the Somme and Vimy Ridge as a walking corpse, a mere wraith of a man who is forced underground by fear and a weakness for his own, slow embalming fluid. Morag's contemporaries are swept away, so that each morning the posting of casualties outside the Manawaka Banner brings with it a new wave of paralyzing sorrow. When the young men like Jules

Tonnerre return, they offer a kind of stinging silence when it comes to matters of war. This is the silence that pervades their whole lives, shutting them down piece by piece. Hagar loses a son-Marvin--to the war in as much as his leaving signals the finality of their connection, a severance that is only healed with a lie decades later, as Hagar teeters on the very edge of death. And yet even though Hagar dismisses the 'glory' of war and presumably the romantic propaganda of the day as well, she *does* reveal a contradictory impulse in respect to the slightly delicate John, who was always her favorite son. Her disillusionment with the war itself, from which she claims a kindred connection with the Laurencian heroines to come, shines through in her own malign assessment of Dieppe as simply "a place where a lot of the Manawaka boys were killed... some place where the casualties were heavy, as the newspapers put it, making them sound like leaden soldiers, no-one's sons" (Stone 244). She does not even try to believe in a greater purpose for the allied raid, but rather perceives the incident as officially-sanctioned murder. Hagar's words are remarkably similar to Vanessa's own assessment which she delivers in the last story of the collection, "Jericho's Brick Battlements:" The war, as far as she was concerned, "meant only that people without choice in the matter were broken and spilled and nothing could ever take the place of them" (182). For the most part, Hagar toes the party line, except for two conspicuous moments in the novel, both of which involve John, in which her somewhat romantic affiliations break through the surface.

The first takes place as she remembers him growing up in Bram's house with very little in the way of educational stimulus. To correct this, Hagar purchases several pictures to display, one of which is Benjiman West's famous *The Death of General Wolfe*. This highly quixotic painting, which "made mythology of history almost immediately" (Ricou 173), practically breathes romance and the glories of divinely-ordered war. Additionally (as if this weren't enough), Hagar displays a print of Holman Hunt, the pre-raphaelite, in which the high priest of romantic literature--the knight--petulantly enjoys his lady's swooning adoration. For John, "who was so impressionable" (82), these paintings are curious choices, to say the least. Following on this, after a space of many years, Hagar finds herself testing the waters of a nursing home called Silverthreads. Doris and Marvin leave her for a moment and

Hagar finds herself in a conversation concerning children with Mrs. Steiner, a Silverthreads resident. When asked about her own family, Hagar hesitates, then answers with a lie: "Two sons," she says, "I mean I had two. One was killed--in the last war" (104). Killed in the war: a hero's death, perhaps. Marvin was the only soldier in the family, and it might be that she wishes he had been the casualty instead. I believe that Hagar's lie was a case of wishful thinking, though not in respect to Marvin. If John had to die, it seems she may have wished for something better then accidental demise. It is perhaps possible to speculate with reference to Mahammed Hasan, that odd warrior for whom Laurence harbored so much respect, he who sought "honour where a man should find it--in battle and the loot of battle" (Heart 39). On Somalian battlefields there was honour to be found. Perhaps, in the back of her mind, Hagar perceived it also on the shale beaches of occupied France. There is at least the hint that this might be the case, that she had wished for John in death what he was sadly incapable of in life.

It is from this mixture of the real and the romantic, the honour and dishonour, from the hatred of war and its glorification that Laurence's five women warriors hail. All their lives, they have been surrounded by veterans of the great material wars of their age and by the bloody tales of the clans from which they draw their primal strength. Some, like Rachel, appear harmless and meek, while others, like Morag, fight convincingly with closed fists. The arenas of their wars are generally mental, and yet, on occasion, they must also battle in public. They hate violence as Laurence hates it, and yet violence is an inextricable component of their being. Each woman--Hagar, Rachel, Stacey, Vanessa and Morag alike--proves to be capable of cruelty and even the infliction of physical harm. Theirs are the spirits of impressive power, with the potential to perform the true heroics of the modern world: raising children that won't hate you, nursing mothers that won't drive you insane, surviving in such a way that you can continue to control your own destiny. These 'small' achievements are the new building blocks of honour. As Vanessa decides in "Jericho's Brick Battlements," "nothing makes heroes of us like acts of heroism, even minor ones" (179). One is tempted to add, *especially* minor ones.

A diagramatic analysis of the Manawakan warrior would

essentially result in two major headings beneath which all the others fall. The Laurencian warrior requires, on the one hand, strength in the sense of personal character and resolve; on the other, faith, which does not mean unqualified *optimism* or foolish hope but, rather, the unshakeable certainty that one's life (and by extension, the life of humanity) is always worth continuing. Laurencian warriors battle from a state of siege, struggling to defend themselves and preserve their precious autonomy. They fight with their backs against the wall, as it were, in that desperate position most suited to ferocity, although their fury is an attribute that is sometimes within themselves. The *bildungsroman* quality of the Manawaka books involves, for the most part, that slow discovery of inner power. The revelation common to Laurence's protagonists is essentially the author's own: "I have this image of myself as a broken reed," Laurence has said, "but I know it isn't true. Other people don't have to be protected from my weaknesses; they have to be protected from my strengths" (Atwood 39).

4. Strength

When Morag was a young girl, Christie told her the stories of Piper Gunn: how he led his starving Sutherlanders from exile on the Scottish cliffs to spartan, pioneer existence in Selkirk's Red River settlement. The Piper was "a great tall man... with the voice of drums and the heart of a child and the gall of a thousand and the strength of conviction" (59). He was the greatest Gunn of all, whose very shadow banished to infamy that pathetic footnote found in the Clans and Tartans of Scotland--"the chieftanship of the Clan Gunn is undetermined at the present time, and no arms have been matriculated" (58)--which, had it ever been believed, might otherwise have erased the name of Gunn altogether. Christie laughs when Morag points out the effacing passage, but this incident is the direct stimulus for his first Piper Gunn tale.

The divining of Christie's motivations in this crucial moment of myth is a simple matter. As Clara Thomas has accurately perceived, the introduction of Piper Gunn serves partly to satisfy orphaned Morag's natural desire for roots. With the benefit of later maturity, Morag is able to look back on her childhood with an understanding of Christie's mythic gifts, that he had given "her

strength to develop into her own person, to find her own place" ("Ossian" 60) by providing her with a reservoir of ancestral fortitude. That this reservoir never *actually* existed is irrelevant to the early, painful requirements of the child. For her, the truth of history is only relative to its own beneficial qualities. In Morag's case, history (as represented in The Clans and Tartans) has failed her, for with the eradication of the Clan Gunn, she is bereft of heritage. Christie's tales, on the other hand, are wholly curative in that, through his creation of Piper Gunn, Morag perceives a wealth of pride, power and resilience filtering down to her through the blood of ages. The tales, once they have reached her, do not lie dormant in her soul for long. Morag is yet a very young girl when she begins to show evidence of her own appropriation of and identification with the Piper Gunn myth. In her "FIRST TALE OF PIPER GUNN'S WOMAN," for instance, Morag paints the desired portrait of herself, of the woman she now feels capable of becoming: "Morag was never afraid of anything in this whole wide world... She would only laugh and say *Forests cannot hurt me because I have the power and the second sight and the good eye and the strength of conviction* " (61). In this, Morag finds the seeds to develop her own impressive power, morality and faith. Through Christie and through his tales she rediscovers the advantages of paternal love, for within the mythical ancestor Gunn rests the spirit of her new, immortal parent. With increasing age and incremental knowledge, Morag is brought first to reject and then to love Christie's myths for what they are. Ultimately, as a writer, Morag comes to appreciate Piper Gunn for the very limitations and historical inaccuracies that deny his credibility as a real person. The reality of the Piper, in terms of his importance to Morag's life, remains consistent from the moment of his inception. For Morag, who admits an affinity for "history and fiction interweaving" (444), the Piper's consistent worth is represented by the strength of his enduring spirit. Even if the Piper never existed, surely his strength of character must have. To have survived the horrors of the Clearances, followed by an odyssey across the seas, a wrong-headed disembarkment on the frozen shores of Churchill Bay and a march across the tundra to Red River, Morag's true people --even as figures of history--were certainly of mythic dimension. Ironically, near the end of the novel, Morag does find the true historical link in the record of young Archie MacDonald, who was

the actual piper among Selkirk's early men. However, in a strange twist of fate, Morag herself adopts his clan, for in accepting Hagar's talismanic brooch with the MacDonald inscription, *Gainsay who dare* , she truly breeches the gulf between history and myth. "Clanranald MacDonald," as David Williams writes, "so very much a part of Morag's place is, through the power of the talisman, become a personal possession, the sum of her inheritance" (323).

At the most basic level, the ancestors of Manawakans are role models. Even Rachel Cameron, who is so innately unsure of herself, draws a certain amount of strength as a result of vague inheritance. She is upset, for instance, when Nick Kazlik follows his brief allusion to the hardships of his grandparents with the snide comment that "I guess immigrant ships would be a little bit out of your line" (112). The implication that her own ancestors have had it easy angers her, although, typically, she will hardly admit it. But in her secret, inner dialogue is the revelation of real ancestral pride. Rachel's external response, in this case an apology, is usually the opposite of what she truly wants to express: the resentment which results from the insult to one's own tribe. "It was he who made me feel like that, " she thinks, "saying it would be out of my line, as though things had been easy for the people I came from, easy back into prehistory and forward forever. What does he know about it?" (112).

Rachel's surge of hereditary pride comes almost by accident, and reveals a passion or connection she herself was not even aware of. At first she has trouble locating the source of her anger towards Nick, indicating that she has not often considered her familial inheritance. Yet she does subsequently recognize her origins, and finds the defence of 'her people' vaguely comforting. This surprise inheritance is Vanessa's experience as well. For, though she rejects the spirit of the Clans as represented in The Clans and Tartans, in the fury of her combative moment with Harvey Shinwell, Vanessa's first impulse is to shout "some Highland war-cry" (155). For both women, ancestral knowledge is primal. Unconsciously, it helps direct them into the desired paths of self-reliance, self-confidence and power.

In The Fire-Dwellers, Stacey sarcastically considers the defensive power of her own heritage. At Mac's tortuous Richalife party, she tries desperately not to jeopardize his relationship with his boss. But the inane conversations of the other Richalife wives

drive her ruthlessly on to destruction. She calls upon the distant past for supernatural deliverance: "Spirits of my dead forefathers, strengthen me" (86). Of course, given Stacey's history with alcohol, the word 'spirit' is at this point a *double entendre* . Yet, however ironic her expression, Stacey's anxiety is perfectly real and, considering the disastrous conclusion of the evening, painfully apt. Coincidentally, her one conversation with Mac's tyrannical boss, Thor, also concerns the issue of heritage. Stacey makes a bad joke--the only one she can remember--calculated to diminish Thor's godlike composition. And yet in the joke, she trespasses upon some fairly sensitive territory by making fun of his ridiculous identity, which is, as it turns out, pure fabrication. Unknowingly and by her mere presence, Stacey cannot help but push Thor's face into that past from which he has so desperately hoped to distance himself: namely, his former life in Manawaka as snotty-nosed Vernon Winkler. In light of these unfortunate results, Stacey's call to her forefathers appears to have gone unanswered, though she continues to exhort the theme later that evening with reference to Mac's clan, the MacFarlanes, who made a profession of robbing travellers by the light of the moon (this too is ironic, for Stacey shows herself to be the true thief by stealing the cakes of soap). Yet ultimately, Stacey's recognition of ancestral power, however drunkenly orchestrated, represents the continuity of hereditary strength in the Manawaka fiction. Such is the sure foundation of personal power among Laurence's women warriors, although it is actually Christie who, in a moment of lucidity, most clearly puts the concept to words. On the subject of his detractors--those human forces of aggression that assault us all--Christie proclaims a universal sentiment: "I open my shirt to the cold winds of their voices, yea to the ice of their everlasting eyes. They don't touch me, Morag. For my kin are as good as theirs any day of the week" (56).

Christie is, in fact, Morag's first true-life hero, and his warring spirit of personal resilience inspires her. Her early attempts at writing are quite revealing in this respect, for Christie himself emerges there in character. "The new story, " at one point, "is about a guy who was one of Piper Gunn's men. A little scrawny guy. Actually, though, he was very tough... his name was Clowny MacPherson, because people always laughed at him on account of he looked silly" (98). Here, surely, are the early

elements of Christie's legacy: that clownish strength and pride with which he was able to withstand the scorn of his peers. Christie is quite invulnerable when the spirits--Red Biddy and the Logans alike--are in him. In those moments of heroic strength, he is capable of almost any act, including truth-telling, however dangerous: "By their garbage shall ye know them" (48)--Christie's war-cry, to be sure. He is able, in the great tradition of Shakespearian fools, to say anything, and he does not often waste this advantage. David Blewett has even referred to Christie as "one of the greatest fools of modern literature" (32). In Manawaka, one learns quickly that such a person is to be avoided at all costs. To be a fool, to speak out with passion and without concern for consequence, is, in Laurence's fictional town, a sign of pure insanity.

George Bowering has written a close analysis of what it is to be a fool in Manawaka. In a study of A Jest of God, Bowering isolates the key components of foolishness: "to become a fool one must cast off fear, not disgust, sometimes the Protestant fear disguised as disgust...[and] share in God's joke, but don't become its butt" (218). God's comedy lives within the hidden portions of human life, in the passions, thoughts and secret acts in which we delight, yet simultaneously deny. Rachel's own moment of becoming a fool coincides with, and perhaps determines, her warrior-emergence. Her biggest handicap, of course, has always been the inability to speak her mind, to match external expression with internal desire. But she is propelled to one of life's great moments of formation. Following a disturbing evening with Nick, she finds herself at the door of Hector's chapel in immediate need of comfort. "My voice ends," she says: the old, obsolete, defeated voice of Rachel.

> I'm standing here, tall as a shadow, transparent, shivering. Then I don't care. Only one thing matters. *Let me come in.*
>
> 'Let me come in.'
>
> That was my voice? That pridelessness? It doesn't matter. Suddenly it doesn't matter at all to me. (125)

In this moment, the inner and outer worlds of Rachel converge. It is an enormous victory, and yet one should not overlook the setting in which it occurs. Hector, whose name is synonymous with the greatest of Homeric men, is here, in his own chapel, a high priest

in the art of war. Shivering on his temple-threshold, Rachel is a hollow vessel of possibility, a hollowness that is displaced by that wonderful pridelessness--foolishness, in fact--that she discovers there. Rachel's voice, the instrument of deliverance, is here, like Excalibur, pulled from a sacred stone. Hector Jonas, described subsequently as Rachel's "unweaponed flagbearer" (207), has come to her rescue. Physically, he is not exactly the image of the white knight, but his wisdom at least is without question. Rachel thinks him a prophet, a "dwarf seer," for understanding her father's macabre desire to live underground, for knowing that death was all he wanted out of life. The image of the wise dwarf is taken from one of Laurence's early African stories, "Godman's Master," in which a dwarf of the Pirafo tribe, once jesters to the great Ashanti kings, learns, through a long process of degradation, what it means to be free. The implication is that Hector, whose wife always laughs just at the "crucial moment" (134), has known sufficient pain to be wise. Rachel's encounter with him sets the tone for the rest of her life. Without him, she might not have found her strength.

A powerless life is bereft of personal voice. Rachel's most serious inability was the cause of her greatest shame. Herein lies the humor of Rachel's sham maidenhood--"a woman's most precious possession" (96)--which, in a better life, she would have gladly disposed of in high school. The joke is continued through Rachel's juvenile state, by the arrested development that makes her ashamed and even afraid of her own body: subjected to the cold appraisals of Dr. Raven, Willard and others, and even driven to an obscene, impossible birth-control contraption of her mother's. That rotting rubber device is just another prop in the divine comedy of errors that is Rachel's life. That which causes nausea "like a stone in...[her] guts" (101) is a bubble of pure mirth in the guts of God. "God's mercy on reluctant jesters" is partly Rachel's invocation at the conclusion of her story, an informed appeal for those locked in her previous state. "God's grace on fools" (209), she continues, for this is the blessing she calls down on herself. Rachel is converted or, rather, transformed to foolishness in the end. And it is at this point, embarked on the courageous path to self-expression, faith and power, that Rachel is most aware of the reality of her own autonomy, of her ability to survive whatever comes her way. This is a very different Rachel from the one with

which we began. This one can face the unknown without debilitating fear. "The wind will bear me, and I will drift and settle, and drift and settle," she says; "Anything may happen, where I'm going" (209).

Rachel gains her power through the discovery of her own voice, having emerged from a state of neurotic lifelessness and an incapacity for self-expression. But it is important to note that in Rachel's new state of being she yet remains indisposed to emotional eruption and the complete disclosure of her inner mind. She has travelled from an absolute extreme of disfunctional verbosity to what one might call a communicative middle-ground. "I will be different," she admits, "I will be the same. I will still go parchment-faced with embarrassment, and clench my pencil between fingers like pencils" (209). Rachel, after all, will always be Rachel, but it is important to recognize that she has reached a compromise of sorts, a balance between the old life and the new. That middle ground of self-expression, within the demands of personal security, represents the full extention of freedom of speech that Manawakan warriors will allow themselves. In a time of war, an errant word in the wrong ear can spell disaster. *Loose lips sink ships* in Manawaka as in any other place. Thus, a code of self-imposed silence is adhered to by every Laurencian protagonist. The process is called "not letting on," and is an integral component of the warrior's way of life.

Morag is by far the most skilled practitioner of this combative art, perhaps because of all the Manawakan protagonists, her childhood is the most destitute. From the very beginning, Morag's poverty draws the unwanted and cruel attention of the others: those of better (meaning richer) parents to whom snobbery seems a right, if not a fundamental duty. Thus, Morag at an early age learns the benefits of concealment. When, for instance, she overhears a malignant conversation concerning herself among the teachers, she is determined to conceal the fact that they have the power to harm her. It hurts, but Morag won't admit it. She "doesn't let on. If you let on, ever, you're done for" (72). If you admit to your Achilles heel, as it were, you sign your own death warrant. In Morag's caution is the hard consciousness of the external aggression that threatens her, the enemy without that waits, always, for the opportunity to attack. This somewhat paranoid attitude is the birthmark of the warrior, a sign or indication of battle-readiness

that can be recognized by the like-minded. Morag, for instance, sees this essential quality of herself in Jules Tonnerre, who, as a poor Métis, represents the lowest class level of Manawakan society. Jules is also a born fighter, but his own wars are more severe: often physical, always alone, and never complete. Yet, as children, they recognize their inextricable bond. This occurs when Morag wonders why Skinner hardly replies except with an occasional fist to the insulting remarks made about him. "Maybe he just doesn't let on," she thinks, "like [me]" (79).

When Morag grows up and departs Manawaka for United College, she leaves behind the rugged, fist-closed, tom-boy shell for what she thinks will make her happy: to be a lady. However, she cannot discard her innate self-defensive impulse: that quality of shrouding feeling that keeps the weakness-seeking enemy at bay. On the train to Everywhere, she refuses to openly weep, for "she can bear anything... really, but not for the people to see" (166). Only in the presence of Mrs. Gersen, herself a person of formidable strength, can Morag allow true emotional release. It is there, suddenly, that she is both terrified and delighted by the recognition of her own amazing reserve of strength: a power born from an intense struggle to survive. After all, getting out of Manawaka is quite a miracle of exertion in itself. Long afterwards, in a despondent letter to Ella, Morag reaffirms the enduring nature of her own power: "This probably sounds pretty gloomy but in fact I'm mostly fairly okay. Don't worry," she writes, "I'm a survivor, just as you are" (354).

Likewise, Hagar proves herself ill-disposed to open tears. This inner fortitude, like that of Morag, was a product of childhood. Hagar resists admissions of pain in the self-defensive impulse that is common to all the Manawaka warriors. At one particularly poignant moment, Hagar remembers how she would 'not let on' to her father. As she is being punished for a misdemeanor in the family store, young Hagar's tenacity marks the awesome fabric of her own developing strength: "I wouldn't let him see me cry," she recalls. And though it is counterproductive to his purpose, Jason Currie cannot restrain his pride: "'You take after me', he said, as though that made everything clear. 'You've got backbone, I'll give you that'" (9).

'Backbone' is the foundation of self-reliance. In their life-long commitment to not let on, to not reveal any more of

themselves than is absolutely required, Laurence's warriors fight --inconspicuously whenever possible--from positions fortified by silence. But the refusal to shed tears--usually a masculine cliché--represents not strength so much as it does the fear of weakness. Weakness is, as we shall see, a thing of which Laurencian warriors are genuinely afraid, something they tend to avoid at all costs, as if it were quite contagious. Hagar, Morag, Vanessa and the rest each come to a point of recognition of the intensity of their own strength, and yet they are also sometimes afraid of losing it. They are terrified to cry or show their true, human feelings in public just in case, having once released control, they never get it back again. This is the basis of Morag's contradictory emotions--jubilation and fear--in her moment of complete release in Mrs. Gerson's arms. In Morag's inner monologue from the *Memory Bank Movie: Ella* , she speaks about herself with the truth of a distant perspective: "How is it [Morag] can feel totally inadequate and yet frightened of a strength she knows she possesses?" (202). The inadequacy is tied to the fear of living *without* backbone, a sorry state with which Morag has had intimate acquaintance in the person of Eva Winkler. Eva, impossibly dim-witted, whose drunken father had been assaulting her since early childhood and whose one baby from a married soldier was aborted by her own hand, has been hammered to submission by mere existence. Eva is a testament to Morag's biggest fear: what might happen to a woman who has lost her strength, her control. "Morag is not--repeat--not going to be beaten by life" (127). Such is the credo of all who battle.

Echoes of restrained tears sound through the Manawaka novels, the silenced sobbing representative of a collective will. Shortly following John's death, for example, Hagar brushes away the hospital matron's automatic compassion: "I straightened my spine," she says; "that was the hardest thing I've ever had to do in my entire life, to stand straight then. I wouldn't cry in front of strangers, whatever it cost me" (242). Likewise, Stacey Cameron masks her tears flowing for faith and phoniness, as she remembers and sings a short passage from a beloved hymn. "Eyelash in my eye," she tells Mac, by way of explanation (63), for at this point he is her enemy as well. Once again, Laurence shows one of her characters more than capable of emotion, only reluctant to reveal it out of fear, as if Mac might develop a method of turning it

against her. In war, it is hard to know who to trust. If unsure, trust no one. Don't ever let on. Keep your mouth shut.

This code of silence is but a portion of the warrior's composition. Additionally, the waging of war at times calls for direct action. Of course, in at least some of her non-fictional writing Laurence has tried to deny any virtue to the concept of physical violence in absolute disregard to the specific qualities of any scenario in which it might occur. She herself admits only to the possibility of "spiritual violence," to which she feels "just as prone... as anyone else" (Lennox 63). But in the public forum, Laurence does not speak directly to the letting of actual blood for the purposes of self-defence, as in, for instance, the case of a woman who is being raped. But the potential for real violence--for harming and even ending the life of another human being--resides within everyone, and it is one dark element of the human composition from which Laurence does not shrink in her fiction. This violent quality of character represents a further linkage of the Manawaka warriors. Their potential for serious action within the standard material confines of war is, perhaps, the result or the reflection of their capacity for war in that other dimension: the psyche. Oddly enough, it is Rachel Cameron who proves the most ferocious in this respect, for, though the violence of the others is generally restricted to contemplation and insignificant manifestations, Rachel actually attacks another person in rage, even to the point of drawing blood. The victim in question is none other than her favorite student, James Doherty, to whom, by the violent action of striking him across the face with a ruler, Rachel is, in some twisted fashion, extending protection. If ever James' classmates thought to punish him for being the teacher's pet, Rachel's action with her ruler (she is the ruler who wields rulers) will put an end to it. Laurence spares no degree of gore in her rendering of the scene: "From his nose, the thin blood river traces its course down to his mouth... He has what we used to call a nosebleed. It won't stop. His blood won't stop"(59). Rachel is at once revolted and resolved at this sharp and completely unexpected burst of rage. She loves him, after all, and longs to retrieve his affection, though it was probably never there to begin with: just another Rachelesque fantasy. However, she is well aware of the need to defend herself, and so she cannot retreat an inch, even for something as simple as an apology. "Everyone within our gates will

hear before nightfall," she realizes; "The only thing I can do now is to bring it off as though I meant it to occur, as though I were at least half justified. *If I capitulate, they will fall on me like falcons"* (59 italics mine). The duties of self-preservation overshadow all others. She is bound to take care of herself.

But Rachel's physical violence does not end here either, for within her secret mind are bloody thoughts, indeed. For instance, her fantasies involving Nick's non-existant wife have the feel of dime-novel horror: "You would like to take a woman like that and throttle her with extreme slowness, your thumbs in her neck veins, and her eyes slowly blurring" (156). And again, when Dr. Raven glibly assumes that a "sensible girl" like Rachel could not possibly be pregnant, her thoughts whirl with violent passion: "I could slash gouges out of his seemly face with my nails," she proclaims; "I could hurl at him a voice as berserk as any plane crash" (184). Practically speaking, of course, Dr. Raven is quite safe in Rachel's care, but one cannot ignore the violent potential that exists, nor the opportunity for real danger, were the inner passions and external capacities to ever merge at the right (or wrong) moment. Among Laurence's women warriors, for whom the restraint of passions is law, such a probability seems highly unlikely. And yet the ability to kill and maim is shared by everyone.

Morag is shocked to discover the depth of her own violent potential as it relates to the protection of her daughter, Pique. At one point in the novel, when she is living in Vancouver, Morag, in a somewhat desperate frame of mind, finds her self engaged in rough sex with Chas, a vague friend of her room-mate's. After their encounter, he refuses to go home, and Morag is suddenly in utter terror for the life of her child. And in that moment, "Morag knows something she did not know before. She is capable of killing, at least in this one circumstance" (349). Chas does leave in the end, so she is not able to test her theory, but Morag is left shaken by yet another recognition of her power. Something similar to this had happened before, in her youth, when she lost her soloist position in the church choir to Vanessa MacLeod. In a temporary rage, Morag wished the girl harm and then subsequently connected this wish with the later death of Dr. MacLeod. This fictional incident matched something from Laurence's own life, a brief story of childhood guilt which she retells in her memoirs. Forced to "wage a kind of war against the two boys next door" on account of

their cruelty, Laurence directed her rage against them: "I had a kind of burning fury that was sometimes enough to scare them off. Then one of them, Gavin, got the infantile paralysis (polio) and died" (Dance 57-8). It is not as if either of them--Morag or Margaret--ever wished anyone dead. But the similarity of both accounts seem to indicate those sort of malignant situational undercurrents of which children are perfectly capable. The non-fictional version, as Laurence admits, occurred in close proximity to her own father's death, which was the sort of "pain that is so great, although possibly unacknowledged, that you have nothing to lose" (57). In such a state of mind, one is capable of anything, even murder, if only by telepathic means.

The Manawaka novels are, in fact, teeming with these violent moments. Near the very end of her life, Hagar imagines violence directed against a nurse who has patronizingly treated her like an infant with her medication, referring to her as a "good girl" as she administers the pills. "I'd stab her to the very heart," Hagar cries "If I had the strength and the weapon to do it" (256). Stacey even worries about losing control of her own behavior to the point of doing violent harm, as in the case of the young mother in the newspapers who smothered her baby for making too much noise. Following a comparatively minor offense--in which Stacey hurls her two boys to the floor in frustrated rage--she wonders, "am I a monster?" (14). The most frightening aspect about the news story of that other mother is that Stacey can, on some level, almost understand the violent forces that drove her on, how the anger just took control until "suddenly she had found she had stopped the noise" (14). Will Stacey also stop the noise, if she is pushed far enough?

Finally, it is Vanessa MacLeod who provides the *piéce de resistance* of potentially violent acts. In the short story, "The Half Husky," is a reproduction of Morag's shocking self-discovery of the ability to kill, only in Vanessa's case the thought is brought much closer to the act itself. In the story, Harvey Shinwell methodically torments her beloved dog, Nanuk. Throughout this extended period of unbridled cruelty, Vanessa's hatred of Harvey increases exponentially. All of this finally comes to a head on the day Harvey shoots the dog in the throat with his slingshot. Vanessa runs from the house with hate raging in her soul: "I grabbed the gate handle," she recalls. "Beside me, Nanuk was in a

frenzy to get out. He could probably have caught up with...[Harvey's] bicycle... Nanuk had all the muscular force he needed to kill a man. In that second, I had not been sure that he would not do it" (153). The uncertainty of Vanessa's moment has nothing to do with Nanuk. The dog's intent as regards his tormenter is pure and absolutely single-minded. His capacity to kill was always stated without question; only the closed gate separates predator and prey. Surely any ambiguity in this situation rests with Vanessa herself, for it is her hand on the latch and it is her decision to open or close it. Prior to this moment, Vanessa admits to fantasies in which she alternatively grants and then denies the boy his life. Suddenly, with Nanuk bristling and growling by her side, the fantasy is realized. Having grabbed the gate handle, a flick of the wrist is all that is required to consummate the bloody deed. And in Vanessa's uncertainty is the undeniable proof that she is more than capable of carrying it out. Here, in the physical world, she has the ability to kill, which is more than Margaret Laurence ever admitted about herself, though she has made this violent quality an integral component of her Manawaka warriors.

5. Weakness

There is a kind of symmetry in Laurence's fictional world that balances weakness with strength. Manawakan warriors do not exist at the *expense* of others, but there is often a weak figure nearby to which the reader may compare them. Often this weakness is the product of misconception: warriors sometimes perceive what isn't there at all. Vanessa, for instance, misinterprets reserve for frailty in respect to her Grandmother Connor, who describes all the biblical stories--even that bloody one of Jonathan and Saul (1 Samuel 31)--with a blanket appraisal: *nice* . "To her everything in the Bible was as gentle as herself," Vanessa disapprovingly decides; "the swords were spiritual only... and the wounds poured cochineal" (67). But Vanessa's judgement is faulty, for Grandmother Connor proves herself the master of formidable inner strength: sufficient even in respect to her bear-like mate, Grandfather Connor. For instance, in the opening story of the collection, she manages to force her husband to reconcile with Uncle Dan. Even Vanessa, who witnesses the occurance, quotes again--with admiration--from the story of Saul: *How are*

the mighty fallen (2 Samuel 1: 19). Grandmother Connor is neither frail nor undefended. Following her death, Vanessa's mother sees what her daughter misses: that Grandmother's methods of battle were unique but no less effective. "She never met [her husband] head on," she says, "but I'll bet she got on better that way" (163).

Most of the Manawakan warriors share Vanessa's short-sighted powers of identification. But the common discovery of weaker opposites--inverted images, as it were--represents both paranoia and a validatory need. On the one hand, Laurencian warriors almost require first-hand knowledge of weakness as a kind of affirmation of their own strength. This is to confirm their own harsh logic of survival: a simple rule which Robert Service has (with some editorial manipulation) put to words: "*This is the law of...* [Manawaka], *that only the Strong thrive, that surely the Weak shall perish, and only the Fit survive* " (12). In the event of insecurity, one needs evidence of the shattered weak: one requires, sometimes, the sight of their broken bodies beside the road. In short, Manawakans need to validate their own policies. They have to see that the weak *do* perish, to assure themselves that being strong is worth the effort.

But at the same time they are afraid of frailty. They despise and pity the weak as though they were lepers of the middle ages. The implication is that debility might be contagious. Warriors like Morag avoid the walking wounded "like the plague" (193), despite the fact that their strength is, in some way, grounded in their own misfortune. Hagar represents perhaps the best example of this contradiction. Her immense strength was, unquestionably, born from weakness: "that meek woman [she] had never seen, the woman Dan was said to resemble so much and from whom he'd inherited a frailty [she] could not help but detest" (25). Hagar senses its legacy in her older brothers like a shark sniffing blood in the water. Thus, though they are bigger, she is certainly stronger and fully aware of their fear. When she was quite young, they used to whip her for fun, afterwards threatening to slit her throat if she told. But "when I'd heard Matt called 'four eyes' at school," Hagar recalls,"and Auntie Doll scolding Dan because he'd wet his bed... I knew they'd never dare, so I told. That put an end to it, and what they got served them right" (8).

Eva Winkler is, for Morag, what Dan is to Hagar. She is the living proof of Manawakan Darwinism. Eva is "gutless... like Mrs.

Winkler, like all the kids, there. In some awful spooky way Morag can understand this. *If you ask for it you sure as hell get it* " (70 italics mine). Morag longs to believe this simple equation of misery. She is strong and wise and therefore won't ever "ask for it" like Eva. Morag "cannot bear to look at Eva very often" and yet would feel more at risk without her. In later life, Eva is replaced by Mrs. Crawley, Morag's disheveled landlady and then, near the end of the book, by Pique's parade of jilted boyfriends. To all of them, Morag continues to apply the harsh (and hopeful) wisdom of her childhood: "If you want to make yourself into a doormat... I declare unto you that there's a christly host of them that'll be only too willing to tread all over you.--*Proverbs of Christie Logan, circa 1936* " (120). Of course, in this lies the essential credo of the warrior: watch your back. But additionally, one finds within it a fantasy of cosmic protection, a Laurencian version of that puritanical sham, poetic justice: *If you are strong where others are weak, nothing evil can touch you* . This is just like believing that only the pure prosper, that the wicked meet only punishment. But the simplicity of this arrangement defies the anarchy that is life. The misfortunes of Manawakans are as random as anyone's.

Weakness is surely just another fact of life, but in the revulsion of Manawakan warriors is a dark quality of intolerance. The weak are fundamental to the strong, but one does not encourage proximity for the risk of contamination. The weak, and the seeming-weak, are none-the-less well-armed and themselves present quantifiable hazards. Rachel recognizes her mother's inherent stealth: "Her weapons are invisible," Rachel notes, "and she would never admit even to carrying them, much less putting them to use" (46). These weapons have the appearance of frailty--the potential for heart attacks, strokes and the like--with which Mrs. Cameron directs Rachel's every move. Her weakness is Rachel's burden, one of the factors that contribute to her oppression. Sometimes, she is even driven to evil hope. In a moment of frustration, Rachel wonders, "Why can't she die and leave me alone?" (120).

This wish for death skirts the very boundaries of the dark side for it speaks to the concept of mercy killing (merciful only for the killer) to which the Manawakan fear of weakness is often addressed. Euthanasia is supposed to be a question of a sufferer's right but one should always question the identity of the true

beneficiary. Sometimes we long to erase the *spectacle* of suffering, rather than the suffering itself. Rachel's longing for her mother's death is selfishly motivated, to be sure. And yet it is easy to see how she might wrap that motivation in pity for her mother's state, as if, seeing the frail body crawling towards death, a swift, propelling kick from behind might be considered kindness.

In Hagar is the most powerful portrayal of this side of the warrior psyche. A memory of a childhood experience, linked to a later action, ultimately brings her to the revelation of her indirect involvement in John's death. The incident hails from her early youth, when she and a group of girls found themselves treading carefully through the Nuisance Grounds: the Manawaka dump. Upon discovering, in a heap of discarded eggs, that some of them had hatched, Morag and the others could only "gawk and retch," all but one: Lottie Drieser. While the others look on in horrified amazement, Lottie destroyed the chicks with the end of a stick. It was certainly the only thing to do and yet Hagar looks back on the incident with cynical distaste: "I am less certain than I was that she did it entirely for their sake," Hagar decides, then adds with a touch of righteousness, "I am not sorry now that I did not speed them" (28). Those chicks were the very image of revolting frailty "feeble, foodless, bloodied and mutilated... an affront to the eyes" (27-8)--but it is on that very basis that Hagar questions the validity of Lottie's 'kindness', which she condemns for being a kind of selfish sanitation. Hagar's sharp, arm-chair analysis may represent the truth, but it is odd that she is incapable (or unwilling) to apply the same line of logic to her own life. For when Lottie's daughter, Arlene, and Hagar's son try to make a life for themselves, the union is, in Hagar's eyes, as pathetic as the half-starved chicks. To remedy the situation, she and Lottie join forces against this new affrontery to the eyes. Lottie agrees to send Arlene away to live with a distant relative for the purpose of breaking up the couple. "That would be best," Hagar agrees, effectively crushing her son's fondest hope. By this action, she drives her son away, out of her own house, to commit his acts of love. One night he and the girl are run over by an unexpected train, the result of a chain of reactions initiated by Hagar and Lottie over tea. Just at the commencement of their mercy-killing, Hagar remembers the dead chicks. With the sudden inclusion of this memory, Laurence links the two acts as manifestations of the

same selfish crime. John and Arlene's love was sacrificed, unwillingly, for Hagar's sake. And for that cruel act she pays the highest price. In the death of the half-hatched chickens is one of Laurence's most powerful moments. It recurs in the Diviners, that epic resting-place of Manawaka lore, when Morag gazes down at the dying princess, Prin, whose hair is "reminiscent (unbearably) of the dead half-bald baby birds fallen from their nests in the spring" (269). Even in this soft moment of precious grief is Morag, through this inextricable link with Hagar, criticized for the quality of her pity. Ultimately, pity cannot be the providence of warriors because it tends to drag them down, to open emotional gulfs they can never fill. The dedicated survivor is always forced to move on. As Christie often says, "sorry" is a christly useless sort of word, known only by liars and those who have fallen by the way. The night-voices that draw Morag and the others from Manawaka say "*Out There Out There Out There* " (181), but never, *Look Back.* In a time of war, there is no room for pity. Sometimes, to gain an objective, you must step over your fallen comrades, you must ignore their pleas for help. The principles of war are multitudinous, but Stacey learns the correct policy concerning pity in one of her night courses. The crystalline, deified voice of her professor proclaims that "pre-mourning is a form of self-indulgence" (9). Cynically, Stacey displays this message on the fridge next to a picture from Vietnam: a young woman peeling the napalm from a child's face. By adding her own caption, Stacey identifies the warrior's posture. Mercy can often cost too much. Sometimes you have to walk away.

6. Faith, Despair

In the The Fire-Dwellers, Stacey Cameron lives in the fires of hell. This complete combustion is symbolic of the warrior's world: a place of chaos, danger and intractable fear. On the completion of the manuscript (March 10, 1968), Laurence explained her choice of title in a letter to Al Purdy: "It is called The Fire-Dwellers. That's all of us, or so it seems to me" (Lennox 87). Perhaps the best quality of the warrior is the accuracy of her own perception, which more carefree analysts might be inclined to describe as paranoid. The most dedicated survivor lives in a perpetual state of alarm: sensitive to the risks at hand and ready to react. The warrior's

world is necessarily on fire. Occasionally, it may be a fatal mistake to assume otherwise. But however bad things appear to be, the warrior must never lose heart. One must absolutely distinguish between prudence (self-motivated caution) and despair (the absence of faith or reasons to continue life). Faith must always be the cornerstone of the warrior, for she would be incapable of war (survival) if she could not justify it. Faith represents an individual's belief in the quality and value of her own life despite the summation of personal hardships which life entails. In the balance of life and death, faith always declares life, but without it one might easily drift towards the alternative. Suicide, when it occurs in the Manawaka books, is the ultimate expression of despair. A warrior fights on, always. Hardships, however painful, must be met with the resolve of Morag's guardian-saint: Catherine Parr Traill: "In cases of emergency, it is folly to hold one's hands and sit down to bewail in abject terror. It is better to be up and doing" (109).

One does what one is capable of, for it is in the doing--as opposed to the paralysis of despair--that one continues the fight. Morag, as a writer, realizes that, for her, the most genuine affirmation of personal faith is the continuation of her own craft, for it is there that she makes her stand. In the age of The Bomb and environmental disaster, Morag is sometimes tempted by the prospect of giving up. But she continues to write, to create, and in so doing proclaims her intention to survive. If "I didn't have *some* faith," she realizes, "I would not write at all or even speak to another person" (186). Total non-creation is, for the writer, death. If she could no longer love her life enough to sustain it, Morag would certainly die. So would anyone.

Yet however strong are their intentions to survive, Manawakan warriors often skirt the edges of death. What they touch is not the physical kind, however, but the death of the soul: the loss of personal validation without which the cessation of breath is but a secondary, though undeniable, result. Stacey Cameron's nuclear fear presents a potential avenue to the greater terrors of despair. An important feature of her surroundings is the "Ever-Open Eye," the television, which daily relays global evidence of pervasive tragedy: murders, rapes, famines, and 'police actions.' The television flickers between violent fiction and violent fact. "Stacey does not know whether [her children] Ian and Duncan, when

they look, know the difference" (5). The television represents a kind of speaking silence strangling that indispensable personal hope that lives in her own voice. The (bad) news on television is paralyzing in its scope and incessant repetition:

> EVER OPEN EYE… BOMBING RAIDS LAST NIGHT DESTROYED FOUR VILLAGES IN…(80); PELLET BOMBS CAUSED THE DEATH OF A HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE CIVILIANS MAINLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN… (100); POLICE TURN HOSES ONTO RIOTING NEGROES IN A CITY'S STREETS CLOSEUP OF A BOY'S FACE ANGER PAIN RAW…. (218)

Laurence puts all the letters in upper-case to stress the cold, surreal quality of these loud cracklings of global flames. The noise is inhuman and life-draining and represents the formidable obstacles with which a warrior's faith must contend. Stacey, naturally, feels powerless almost all the time. She even went so far as to acquire a gun (her father's) against the day when the bombs would fall. She planned to use it on her kids if, by some unfortunate miracle, they were still alive because living through the lingering death of a world would not, she imagined, be worth the trouble. In that moment--in contemplating her willful destruction-- Stacey knew what the loss of faith could mean. She then threw the gun, symbolic of soulful death, into the concealing depths of Timber Lake. This action did not erase her fears, it did not even ease them, but by destroying the instrument of despair Stacey renewed her own intention to survive. Life, even that lived in a nuclear wastleland, must *always* be worth living.

Living was, for Lazarus Tonnerre, his greatest accomplishment. Such, in The Diviners, is the assessment of his son, Jules. Near the end of his own life, Jules sings to his daughter, Pique, the song of Lazarus:

> Lazarus he never slit his throat, there.
> Lazarus he never met his knife.
> If you think that isn't news, just try walking in his shoes.
> Oh Lazarus, he kept his life, for life (453).

The song is offered in part as a warning or invokation to Pique to fight for her own life as her Grandfather did, and partly as a thread in the tapestry of family heritage: a passing down of the stories that will make her strong in the same way that Morag was strengthened by the tales of Piper Gunn. But Jules ultimately

forsakes his own advice. Badly afflicted with throat cancer, he speeds the inevitable. Billy Joe, Jules' closest friend, brings to Morag the news of his self-inflicted end. "He didn't wait for it" (472), Billy says in a typically Manawakan evasion of phrase, his explanation extremely similar to the assessment of Niall Cameron concerning the death of Lachlan (Morag's old boss) which happened years before. Lachlan "chose it" (274), Niall said, as if he could not bear the official word. For both men, the pain of living had become too much to bear, and yet the implication of Jules' song is that, no matter what the hardships (for surely neither man had it worse than Lazarus), life *can* prevail: that there is no pain so great that it cannot be borne. Suicide is surrender, an ignominious defeat. If life were truly too much to bear then perhaps one might be able to end it with honour. But such is not the case in Manawaka, for in Laurence's fictional world the legacy of chosen death is tainted. There is, in such an act, nothing glorious or worthy or defensible. Rachel, with the instruments of self-inflicted death (her mother's sleeping pills) in hand considers, for a moment, the repercussions of her own death. She sees it, primarily, it terms of an escape but then comes to the realization that it will in fact mean only an absence. "They will all go on somehow," she thinks, "but I will be dead as stone and it will be too late then to change my mind" (176). The voluntary exchange of living flesh for uncertain presence is hard to justify through careful thought.

In December of 1963, Laurence, who was living in London at the time, learned of the death of the poet, Sylvia Plath. "She had prepared breakfast for her children, set the table, done all the dutiful things, but when her children got up, they found the gas oven on and their mother dead" (Dance 162). While it is impossible to truly understand or honestly evaluate an individual's motivations to do such a thing, what one cannot ignore or fail to judge is the human wreckage left behind. At the time, Laurence's initial reaction (after mourning) was to feel slightly angered by Plath's self-absorbed commiseration: that "thing which I can not entirely dismiss (even though it probably makes me appear hard-hearted)--the element of self-drama and pity" (Lennox 16). The making of breakfast, for instance, the setting of the table: these are the little touches of fabrication which were intended to charge the overall pathetic landscape of the scene. Plath's suicide resembles Hemingway's (and vice versa) in the way in which he

covered his head with a thick garbage bag so that his wife would not have to witness the result of a shotgun blast. The bag is like Plath's laid table: both of which were pure dramatic flair but never intended for practical application. Mary Hemingway wanted her husband's love, not his concern for blood spatters on the walls. Plath's children, after all, surely did not want breakfast that morning. They wanted their mother. Sometime after this, Laurence read The Savage God, by Alvarez: a book which found justifications for Plath's despair in the spartan state of her environment: a middle-aged woman writer living alone with two children in a dingy flat, recently separated from her husband, torn by competing urges to write and look after her kids... an almost exact portrait, as it turns out, of Laurence's own life at the time. "Her situation had little to do with death," Laurence writes (Dance 163). It had everything to do with giving up.

The Manawaka novels are rife with suicides or attempted suicides, as a moment of acounting will reveal: One in A Bird in The House (Vanessa's cousin, Chris, commits a kind of reality-suicide by retreating completely into his imaginary worlds), one in A Jest of God (Rachel's abortive attempt), three in The Fire Dwellers (Tess Folger, Stacey's neighbor, tries and fails; Buckle, Mac's war-buddy, and Buckle's mother succeed), and two in The Diviners (Lachlan--because he never got over the death of his son at Dieppe--and Jules). Each carries its own measure of sorrow and shame but never glorification. But the death of Jules, who is by far the most important character of this infamous group, is the most enigmatic in its effects. Billy Joe presents Morag with the knife--now well-cleaned and sharpened--that she had traded to Jules for Hagar's mythic brooch. This knife is to be Pique's legacy, the last gift from her father. But in Lazarus' song, Jules praised *his* father for 'not meeting his knife', a phrase emblematic of succumbing to the easy desire: death. The implication, however, is that Jules has met *his* knife anyway, the very knife he passes on to his daughter. This blade of Tonnerre steel is an extremely powerful symbol, open to interpretation in the most diverse directions. Does Jules pass on the knife as a potential route for escape, or as a warning against it? Should Pique toss it somewhere from which it can never be recovered, as Stacey did Niall's gun? Pique's decision to seek her Uncle Jacques at his homestead on Galloping Mountain speaks, at least, to her own immediate decision to survive, to fight

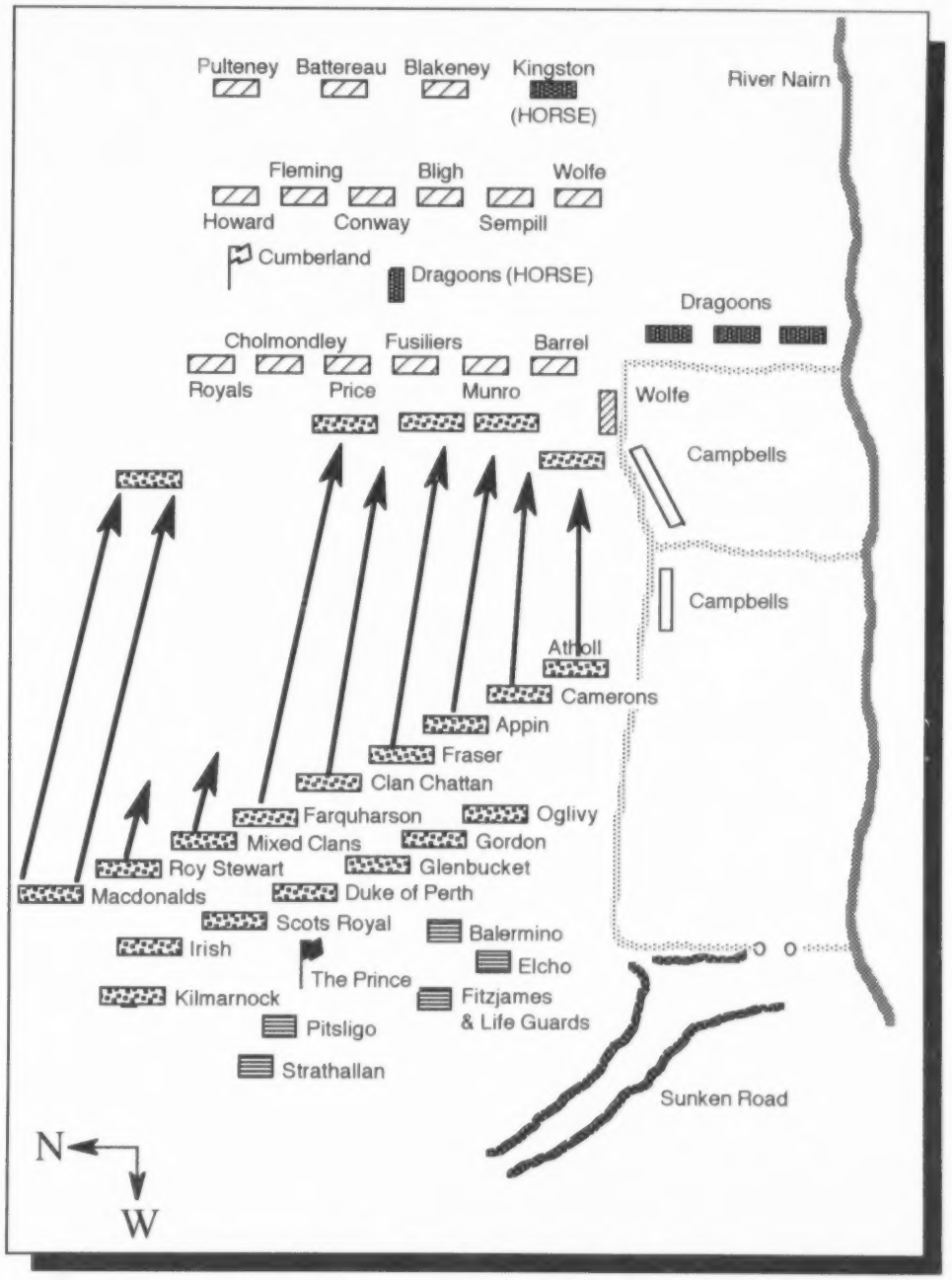
on for life. Unlike Jules, Jacques has located a "livingplace", a place in which--literally--life is possible, if not exactly assured. Jules correctly identified the urban centres, teeming with racial intolerance, as places where he and his family could not easily survive. "Too many have died,' Jules warns Pique, "Too many, before it was time" (456). Jules, his sister Valentine (who died as a whore on booze and speed), his brother Paul (who was mysteriously drowned while guiding some white hunters) and sister Piquette (who was burned to death--drunk--with her two sons) found only endless, opposite versions of Jacques' Eden: dyingspaces. In Jacques is hope; in Jules, despair. At the end of the novel, Pique is poised between life and death, leaning--as one would hope--towards life.

Chapter III:

Wars

CULLODEN: April 16, 1746

Druim-nar deur! (The Ridge of Tears) *A cry heard at Culloden, in the black days of battle, when the clans stood together for the last time, and the clans were broken by the Sassenach cannon and the damned bloody rifles of the redcoat swine* (Diviners, 57).



1. Background

In Laurence's Manawaka, the Battle of Culloden is but one of three central episodes of Highland lore. However, it is the first and most important piece of that giant, binding myth, the elemental catalyst of both subsequent mythic installments: first, the mass exodus--known as the Highland Clearances--which would prove fundamental to the development of Canada, and second, the settlement of Selkirk's brave colony on the banks of the Red River. Prince Charles' foolhardy decision to meet the British army on its own terms led to the irreversible destruction of the clans. Culloden was the last military battle ever fought on British soil because the most ardent combatants in all of Britain--those who had been almost the perennial cause of civil strife--were, on April 16, 1746, finally and definitively silenced. Highland history, the privilege of Culloden's victors, would be forever limited to empty-headed romance. The tall, handsome clansman dancing reels upon the heath was a hopeless figure of romantic trash. The fall of the feudal clans and their paternalistic structure left the penniless inhabitants without employment, protection, or property. Southern speculators travelled north in the wake of the British army, seizing cattle and land on the strength of royal grants. Mass evictions followed, forcing an increasing reliance on decreasing plots of unclaimed soil. Overcrowding led to disease and, ultimately, starvation. The object of the Clearances, which began as early as 1785, was the mass introduction of black-faced lintons (sheep). For Highland pioneers banished to the ends of the earth, the extreme conditions in Canada were no more harsh than those at home. Whatever the discomfort--whether frigid winds, mosquitos or savages--nothing could be worse than a slow starvation in one's own beloved land. The defeat at Culloden, a critical theme of the Manawaka works, meant infinitely more than the break-up of any army. For the majority of Highlanders, 1746 changed the fundamental qualities of home itself. The Highlands would never be the same again. Only a fraction of ancient tradition, polished by romance, would survive. For the Highlanders themselves, the bloody day at Culloden marked a national reality of dispossession.

Who were the Highlanders? Geographically speaking, they were those who lived north of "a winding line from Dunbarton, upon the River Cyde, to Dunistra, upon the Firth of Dornoch," or, roughly

speaking, the northern third of the British Isles (Home 1). The employment of a broad, all-embracing term such as "Highlanders" is misleading if it gives the impression of a national identity or cohesiveness. Generally speaking, Highlanders were alike only in that they were *not* Lowlanders, but there ended the common bond. In fact, the most consistent characteristic of Highland life was conflict between the clans themselves: blood feuds waged on the basis of ancient quarrels, theft of cattle or a simple desire for power on the part of an ambitious chief. Intricate systems of agreements and diplomacy were forged and betrayed on a regular basis: only the loyalty of blood was sacred. Solidarity within the members of the clan itself--all of whom were blood-relations--was absolute. The individual was, literally, a possession of the entire clan and therefore bound by ancient right to fulfill without hesitation the wishes of his clan chief. These chiefs, the heads of families, reigned supreme over their kin, but their power of influence in the national scene ranged greatly from clan to clan. At the time of Culloden, for instance, the most powerful chief (the Duke of Argyll, head of the Campbells) had at his disposal a force of over 5000 warriors, while the least potent (the Laird of the Clan MacKinnon) commanded only 200. Still, in respect to their *own* clans, both chiefs were equal in relative supremacy.

While Europe savored the Age of Reason, Highlanders lived in an intensely feudal structure: within a system of trickle-down allegiances. This can be most clearly understood in the context of the seventeenth century, when the whole area witnessed something of a real estate boom. As a result of increased cattle exports (the value of which, in 1614, was recorded at £750 000), the land value of the broad Highland heaths increased forty times (Murray 83). The chief owned all the land by right, but he parcelled it out to his immediate relatives: the gentlemen of the clan. These men (tacksmen) received the land at a rent or tack. After stocking the land with their own cattle and crops, the tacksmen commissioned subtenants to tend it. These tenants, subsequently, leased a further piece of the land to cotters--peasants--who scratched a living from the soil for themselves after sending the majority of the yield up the feudal pyramid. From all such tenants, the tacksmen--acting for the chief--exacted feudal services (including the obligation to fight in clan wars). Not every soldier at Culloden participated as a matter of personal conviction. But in matters of

clan directives, the members simply did not enjoy the option of disobedience. Mutiny in any form was met with extreme reaction: eviction, banishment, torture, or death. Additionally, clan members were bound by ancient codes of honour. Even the chief's most unreasonable request could be understood as a question of familial duty. For a cotter, who owned nothing and barely survived on his own meager plot of land, these traditional obligations were often his only source of pride. After all, as Prebble asks, "where could a clansman run after he had betrayed his chief?" (Culloden 52).

This was the society on which the House of Stuart pinned their hopes for restoration to the British crown. The Revolution of 1689 and the defeat of the Highland army at Killiecrankie meant the deposition of the last Stuart king, James II. It was from this moment of war and royal chaos that the battle of Culloden truly sprang. In 1689 the Jacobite movement, which fought for the Stuarts' restoration, began its protracted campaign of intrigue. For nearly six decades, Stuart descendants conspired intermittently with the Spanish and the French (whichever was at war with England at the time) with little success. At the succession of the Hanoverians under George II in 1715, a Highland army under the Earl of Mar fought a drawn battle with royal troops at Sheriffmuir, but little progress was made towards the Jacobite objective. Other equally fruitless adventures followed. A Spanish invasion fleet, sent to join the Highlanders in an attack on London, was crippled by storms in 1719. Again, in 1739, a French promise to aid the Stuarts with troops was rescinded the following year due to other political complications in Europe. Finally, in 1745, the Jacobites took matters into their own hands. On July 5, Charles Stuart (great-grandson of James II) boarded a ship for the Long Isle without the fickle assistance of foreigners. His arrival in the Highlands on July 23 heralded the beginning of the last and greatest Jacobite rebellion.

2. The Battle

News of the Prince's arrival spread fast enough to allow for the gathering of about 5000 men under the Stuart banner for the first engagement of the campaign. At Preston, near Edinburgh, the Highlanders easily thrashed the King's Scottish garrison under Sir Jonathan Cope. This Highland success impressed William enough to

effect the withdrawal of six thousand Dutch mercenaries, plus three battalions of British regulars from the European campaign being fought in Flanders. William's son and Charles' cousin, the Duke of Cumberland, also departed Flanders to assume command of a mainland army consisting of nearly 9000 troops, 2400 of which belonged to cavalry units. This force, which would eventually meet the Highlanders at Culloden, set off at a rapid pace for the northern territories on October 19. But before they could arrive, Charles met and defeated the third and largest British army under General Hawley at Falkirk. There, the numerically superior British forces were again humiliated by the ferocity of the Highland charge. The clansmen had succeeded in surprising the enemy in his own camp, a tactic which would be inadequately repeated half a year later at Culloden itself. But in the Fall of 1745, with two major victories behind them, the Highlanders posed a serious threat to the political stability of England. Yet for all his success, the Prince's situation grew steadily more perilous. The risks of being surrounded and cut off from his provisions grew exponentially with every step southward. Thus, in the interests of supply, a decision was made to retreat ahead of Cumberland's pursuit. Additionally, it was hoped that reinforcements could be procured (by coercive means, if necessary) from friendly territories once the army was situated in the proximity of its Highland countrymen. There is little debate as to the strategic logic behind the Prince's retreat. Cumberland's faster and more organized force would surely have cut the Highland supply lines had they remained in the south. However, the orchestration of the retreat itself left much to be desired. The strategic *value* of the Highland move proved mostly to the advantage of the British Duke. The Highlanders fell back from Falkirk in a state of Miltonic chaos. Scattered groups travelled sporadically north, abandoning equipment and supplies--including artillery pieces captured from Cope--all along the route. Isolated stragglers were engaged and destroyed by Cumberland's advance guard who pursued and harassed the retreating Highland army day and night.

The decision to make a stand at Culloden was the Prince's own. Lord George Murray, Duke of Atholl, who had actually commanded the clans at Preston and Falkirk, was completely opposed to the choice of ground, which he declared to be "certainly not proper for Highlanders" (Prebble, Culloden 56). Murray's opposition was based

on the simplest of military theories: *choose the terrain best suited to the disposition of your own troops* . The ground at Culloden was hard, perfectly flat and treeless, the only variant being a long stone wall enclosing a stretch of farmland. These features greatly inconvenienced the Highlanders for two reasons: one, the hard ground was perfect for the employment of cavalry (of which Cumberland enjoyed total supremecy in terms of both quality and numbers) and two, there was no cover of any kind for advancing troops, which meant that the critical Highland charge could be fired upon several times before they ever reached the British lines. Of these two factors, only the latter was to prove decisive in the actual battle, but either one ought to have been reason enough to relocate the battlefield. However, the Prince had become absurdly confident in his own as yet untested qualities of military leadership. In spite of Lord Murray's protests, he refused to change his mind. On April 15, the Highlanders drew up in a line of battle at Culloden and waited for Cumberland to arrive.

Other serious problems plagued the Highland forces prior to battle. A dribble of desertions since Falkirk had reduced the army considerably over time. The large Campbell Clan, who had sided with the British king, were rampaging, largely unopposed through the Highland glens. Consequently, a significant number of the Prince's men had felt compelled to see to the safety of their land and families. Thus, daily, the army's position was growing weaker. This seemed, on the surface at least, a good reason to attack as soon as possible. But with hindsight, Murray's plan to retreat further north and wait for the coming spring was far more sensible. In lieu of further retreat, he suggested a more suitable ground for battle (rougher, and with intermittent bog) to the east, to no avail. The Prince was determined to have his way.

Finally, a small matter of logistics may have been the proverbial straw that broke the clans' resolve. A wagon-train of supplies, from which the Highland army was supposed to be fed, never arrived on the day before the battle itself. Thus, on the eve of engagement, the clansmen were weak with hunger. This unforgiveable oversight even contributed to the problem of desertion as sporadic units wandered from the field in search of food. The lack of dinner was indicative of the general state of the Prince's army before Culloden. Exhausted, cynical and impatient after months of hard campaigning--followed by disheartening

retreat--the armed confederation of clans was no longer militarily viable. This would be proved conclusively by the events of the following day.

And yet, as if the misfortunes listed above were not enough, the clans were to experience one final disaster before the momentous battle itself. An effort to duplicate the successful action at Falkirk was undertaken. As evening approached, it was decided that the army should march on Cumberland's camp (a distance of ten miles) and attack under cover of darkness. It was a bold plan forced on an army which, by this point, completely lacked the requisite organizational abilities. The long column of soldiers which got under way in the early evening, was soon reduced to chaotically-ordered groups, many of whom were hopelessly lost in the darkness. Significant discrepancies in marching speeds had strung the army out along the entire route. When Lord Murray and the Atholl men reached the edge of Cumberland's perimeter, the rear guard of the Highland force had barely traversed a third of the distance. Faced with insurmountable odds in the event of an unsupported attack, Murray was forced to simply turn his men around and return the way he had come, gathering together the stray Highland units as he made his way back to Culloden. Having returned to their place of origin near daybreak, the wretched clansmen were able to snatch a few scant hours of rest before the battle began. The "night attack" had achieved only further exhaustion and frustration for the Highland men. The clansmen facing Cumberland's fresh troops on the morning of April 16 had been thoroughly drained by circumstance and the inept military qualities of their leaders.

Around eleven o'clock, the two armies took to the field. The Highland line--composed of a smaller number of men--was nearly twice the width of Cumberland's. Because of their sword attack, Highland soldiers typically required more free 'swinging space' per man (perhaps an extra one third) than regular troops, and yet, even with this in mind, the positioning at Culloden indicates that the clansmen were standing too far apart. The battle cries and shrieking pibrochs of Highland tradition were interspersed by more experienced officers shouting, *Close up! Close up!* This misalignment of the Highlanders would have grave repercussions in the general charge. Because of the inordinate length of the Highland line, it was impossible to tell that the left flank was, in

fact, significantly further from the British lines than the right. Tactically speaking, this discrepancy of distance practically split the Highland charge into two independent attacks with, perhaps, a sixty second interval between them. Cumberland's men were thus able to concentrate their fire more effectively on each charge as it presented itself. For all intents and purposes the army of clans, numerically inferior from the outset, was further divided, during the battle itself, by a factor of two. Not surprisingly, the only Highland troops who actually survived long enough to reach the British lines were those who began their charge on the right or centre portions of the Prince's line.

Ironically, the majority of Highland casualties occurred in the first fifteen minutes of the battle: before the armies ever met in close quarters (Prebble, Culloden 85). Cumberland's artillery literally shredded the clansmen at will, as the Prince tried to decide on the order to charge. As one British observer drily put it, "the Highlanders were much galled by the Enemy's Cannon [sic]" (Anon 16). Finally, after what must have seemed an eternity of senseless carnage, the clans would be held no longer.

As the clansman raced across the long moor, the front ranks of Cumberland's men smoothly dropped to their knees, and wave upon wave of deadly fire commenced. At a generous estimate, only about twenty percent of the Highlanders ever got close enough to hew down Englishmen with their swords. But even these 'fortunate' men could not possibly survive for long in the fray, since, in attacking the British head on, they exposed themselves to flanking fire from the right (from Wolfe's regiment, not to mention the Campbell militia, who were firing over Culwhiniac's stone wall). The other eighty percent were simply broken far short of the British lines and forced to flee the field *en masse* . The Jacobite dream, the offspring of nearly sixty years of fervent hope, was crushed, irrevocably, in a matter of minutes. Even the incredible, last-minute escape of the Prince could not repair the cause. After years of heroic Highland wanderings, always one step ahead of Hanoverian pursuit, Charles would eventually return to Europe a bitter, remorseful man. But the fate of his beloved Highlanders was infinitely worse by comparison. The post-Culloden actions of Cumberland and the British administration (including the banning, on penalty of death, of the gaelic language, highland dress and the music of the pipes) would soon demonstrate to the survivors that

they had lost, not simply another war, but the right to prolong and nurture their own culture. Over half a century later, James Loch, responsible for the notorious Loch Policy of 1813, would enunciate the ultimate and consistent goal of British policy in the rugged Highlands: that "the children... will lose all recollection of the habits and customs of their fathers" (Prebble, Highland Clearances 77).

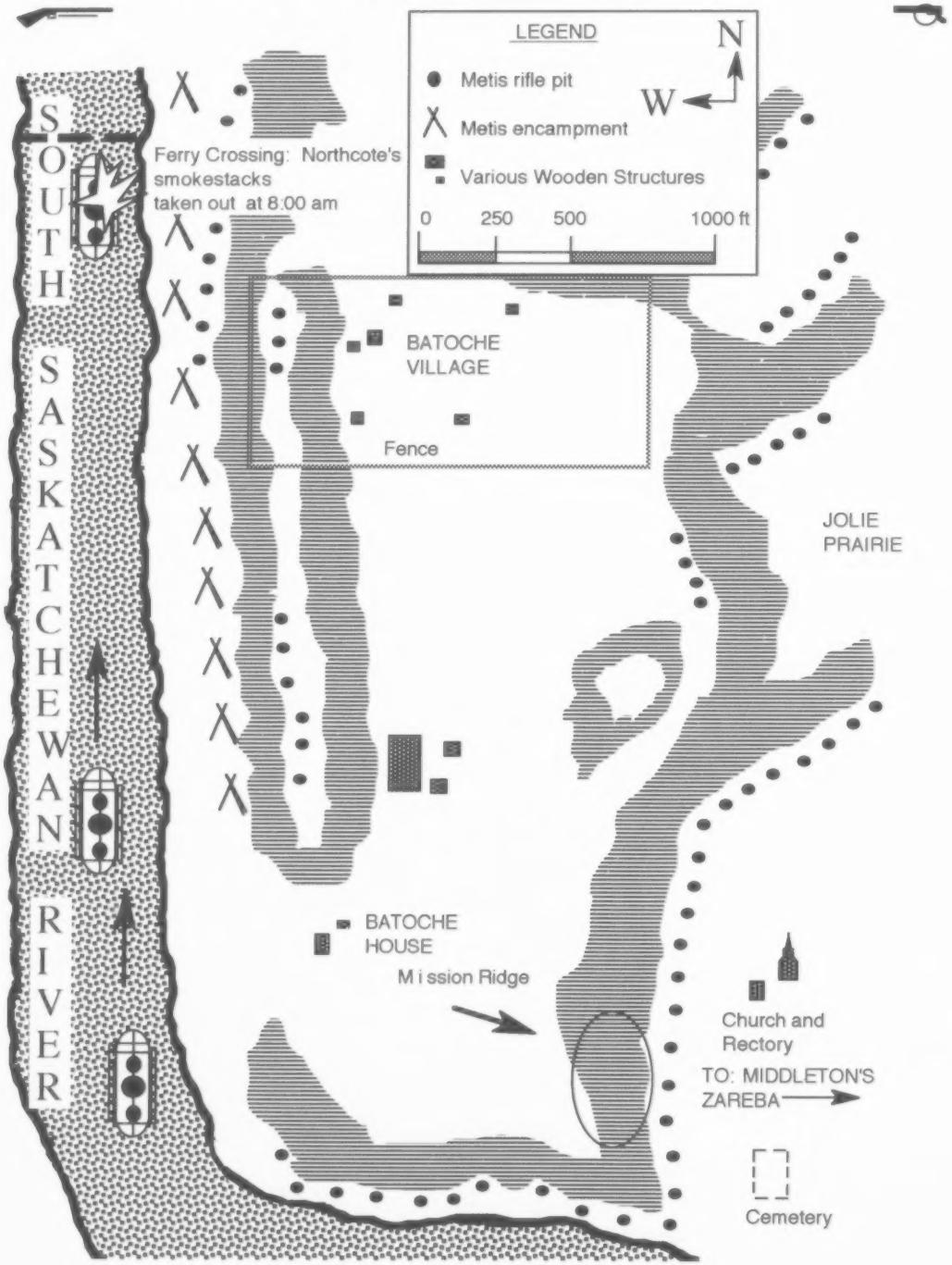
But there were other, even more insidious twists of fate to come after Culloden, for, though only a fraction of Highlanders actually participated in the battle, none would be spared its major consequences: namely, indiscriminate executions, seizure of property, and the abolition of the hereditary jurisdictions of the chiefs. Practically overnight, the highland feudal system was replaced by British administration and the rule of Law. After Culloden, the chiefs themselves--stripped of their military potential--were transformed from warlords to landlords. In light of the sudden loss of feudal income, their large estates became economically unfeasible. Tenants who could not pay were evicted, without concern for clan or kin, from lands of generational occupancy. And as the lucrative profits of sheep farming became apparent, even those rare paying tenants were pushed off the land. The bewildered Highland people were herded like cattle to the sea and dispatched to the four corners of the globe. It was not enough to have been thrashed by the British; they had been betrayed by their clan, that most sacred of institutions, as well. They looked back from the stern of the emigrant ships to a land no longer their own.

One such ship, *The Prince of Wales* , carried "ninety-six young men and women [who had] proudly chosen exile" over the meager, stony plots of land offered on the cliffs at Helmsokle (Prebble, Highland Clearances 76). Gunns, MacBeths, Methesons, Sutherlands, Bannermans: they were the pioneers of a whole new world. Disembarked on the frozen shores of Hudson's bay, they would walk a few hundred miles south to Lord Selkirk's colony on the Red River.

Formless, bereft of a meaningful past, untimely ripped from the womb of tradition, these brave survivors would be the cornerstone of a mythic heritage all their own.

BATOCHE: May 12, 1885

The family's shack was built by Jules Tonnerre "when he came back from Batoche with a bullet in his thigh, the year that Riel was hung and the voices of the Métis entered their long silence" ("The Loons" from A Bird in the House, 108).



1. Background

The battle at Batoche in 1885 was, to the Métis, what Culloden had been to the Highlanders: a last stand against an expanding, more pervasive society. Batoche was the second and final act of a familiar frontier drama: that of manifest destiny and the incompatibility of competing cultures. South of the 49th Parallel, matters of supremecy were definitively settled through bloody Indian wars and massacres like Wounded Knee. The American army was infamously ruthless in this respect, pursuing Sitting Bull and the emaciated Sioux nation all the way north, into Canada. There, in June of 1877, they were met by Superintendent James Morrow Walsh of the North West Mounted Police, an occasion which Grant MacEwan rightly recognized as "a crucial confrontation in Canadian history" (84). Walsh and his miniscule force of four constables stood as the sole yet solid representatives of peaceful order and humanely administered law. Canadians, in the eighteen-eighties, savored this apparent discrepancy in the methods of dealing with aborigines. A general feeling of anti-Americanism--encouraged by sporadic Fenian raids, pro-annexation editorials in the northern states, and political crisis, such as the San Juan Dispute--engendered national distrust of the aggressive neighbor to the south and fueled a Canadian sense of pride in her own comparable humanity. Instead of deadly force, order in the vast western territories had been maintained largely by the adherence to *laissez -faire* economics. The critical fur trade kept the natives and whites harmless in co-dependent occupations: the former in the trading of furs, the latter in the selling of them. In this merchant society, the Métis provided dry buffalo meat (pemmican) to all levels of the industry: a task of perennial, free-ranging hunting that most suited their general disposition. Set above all others was the great trading magnate--the Hudson's Bay Company--which created, enforced and maintained law and fundamental order in its colossal territories. The power of the company was absolute. Government was, in a sense, the privilege of the private sector.

Things ran smoothly in the West so long as there was trade to be conducted. Participants at every level of the industry could be single-minded in their devotion to the task at hand. All the while, settlement was slowly, almost stealthily established; territories were surveyed and a stream of money flowed to its many masters

in the East. The progress of 'Canadian' (meaning white anglo-saxon) manifest destiny was certainly slower than the American model, but it was unquestionably less painful. Following Confederation in 1867, the new citizens of Canada brimmed with pride. The nation was being forged, it seemed, without the complications of stained consciences. Unfortunately, the vast majority of Canadians had never seen the West for themselves: they knew it only as a place of fur hats, savages and dime novel adventures. Even governmental figures--Sir John A. Macdonald in particular--had little or no idea of the problems faced by early westerners. Yet, paradoxically, as settlement improved and the central government inched closer to the Pacific, communication and understanding actually seemed to diminish. The disgruntled inhabitants--and here we turn our focus to the Métis specifically--saw (accurately) in the designs of monolithic Ottawa a hostile and unsympathetic machinery bent on the ultimate destruction of their way of life. By 1885, this latent frustration boiled over into war.

Private-sector government operated smoothly for some time, but the risks of such a system became hastily apparent in 1863. In that year, under pressure from the Colonial Office in London, the Hudson's Bay Company proprietors agreed to sell their shares at an inflated rate to a new committee of land speculators dedicated to opening an extensive highway and telegraphic communications across the whole of Rupert's Land, thereby connecting the new crown colony of British Columbia with the rest of British North America. The guardians of frontier law, those who had literally carved a trading empire out of the wilderness, proved fickle in the face of Imperial policy and the profit motive. The original, grand Company of Adventurers, which had ruled Rupert's Land according to the terms of King Charles' 1670 Charter, sold out for the round sum of one and a half million pounds. The implications, for the West, of this business transaction made half a world away were overwhelming. As he heard the news, Chief Factor Donald Smith, who was to play a central role in the Métis saga at Fort Garry, "trembled so that he could barely stand" (MacKay 278).

On July 1, 1867, the Dominion of Canada was proclaimed by the British North America Act, clause 146 of which made provision for the annexation of Rupert's Land and the whole of the North West Territories. One year later, the transference was underway, the terms of which called for the Canadian government to pay a sum of

three hundred thousand pounds, in addition to generous land grants, mineral rights and protections from 'excessive' taxation. But the agreement was carried out chaotically: the three hundred thousand was not immediately paid, nor were adequate provisions made to inform or prepare the local populace. In the wake of the Company's departure and in the absence of a practical transformation of powers--without the establishment of new and corporeal institutions, such as courthouses, police forces, militia, etc.--the North-West was left in dire need of a recognizable infrastructure for the maintenance of order. In other words, a political vacuum ensued, one that would have to be filled. This point of history was, for the Métis, where the Time of Troubles really began.

In The Diviners, Jules and Morag swap stories about the Riel rebellions: Métis and Scottish versions, respectively. Jules' description of the incident at André Nault's farm in October of 1869 is worthy, as always, in terms of its emotive communication. "The government men... they are one hell of a mean outfit," says Jules. "They send in men to take all the measurements of the land, so's they'll know how much they got when they get it. So Rider Tonnerre, he says to himself *The Hell with this* " (161). The latter sentiment is surely representative of Métis feelings at the time. Colonel Dennis' unannounced arrival with his team of unruly surveyors (including the impish Thomas Scott) was an undiplomatic introduction to Canadian bureaucracy, to say the least. Technically, as Riel would insist, the Canadian government had no status in Rupert's Land so long as the three hundred thousand pounds named in the agreement remained unpaid. Riel's Provisional Government was justified by international law in so far as he could prove that no legitimate power remained in place. The subsequent seizure of Fort Garry raised the ire of Eastern Canada and left Hudson's Bay Company officials smugly pleased with the timing of their withdrawal, but Riel insisted that the move was taken for the good order and safety of all. The Métis legitimacy was, perhaps, confirmed by the passing of the Manitoba Act in 1870. Riel won for his people a token of autonomy, however short-lived.

But the arrival of Colonel Wolsely's expeditionary force was hardly a time for celebration. Enraged by the 'murder' of Thomas Scott the previous spring, these Canadian emissaries, many of them Orangeman, raped, plundered and murdered the Métis populace in retaliation. Riel, who escaped into the brush at the last possible

minute, was horrified by the Canadian reaction, firmly believing as he did that Scott had been 'executed' by a formal and legitimate authority: namely, his own. The question of Thomas Scott is a complex one--certainly beyond the bounds of this brief synopsis of events--a political error that would haunt Riel to his final hour in Regina, as Newman illustrates by citing one of the jurors of that famous trial: "we tried Riel for treason," he said, "and he was hanged for the murder of Thomas Scott" (54). But in 1870, that day in court was still a long way off. After Fort Garry, Riel travelled East, spending time in Montreal (including a stint in a mental asylum), Chicago and Minnesota, finally setting in a Métis community in Montana. He became an American citizen and slipped contentedly back into anonymity. Meanwhile, trouble was brewing on the Saskatchewan plains, as the Métis who had escaped from Red River began to sense, once again, the uncomfortable encroachment of *Anglais* society. "It would be some time later," Jules says, "out west, near Qu'Appelle or around there in Saskatchewan... the Métis were putting on a war, there, for their land" (162).

By 1885, the migrant Métis--once again under threat from new land surveys, settlement and dispossession--finally came to the realization that, though they might run, they could not hide. Macdonald's National Policy and the speedy construction of a transcontinental railway virtually guaranteed the termination of the traditional, open-prairie lifestyle to which the Métis and native peoples were accustomed. One's path of retreat before the railway was finite. Unfortunately, the prairies were not inexhaustible. In the opinions of Gabriel Dumont and his council at Batoche, it was time for the Métis to make a stand.

Riel returned to Canada at the urging of Dumont. A spiritual leader was needed for the grand struggle, and Riel's own savior-complex was tailor-made for the position. It became quickly apparent to all that this struggle would not be like the one in Manitoba; there would be little room, this time, for legal appeals and eloquent words. Almost immediately, open violence erupted at Duck Lake where Dumont intercepted Superintendent Crozier and 100 Mounted Police. Traditional Métis tactics of surprise, encirclement and ambush easily won the day, and it was only on Riel's insistence that Dumont's men were prevented from pursuing and massacring the badly organized police column. This occurred on March 26, and headlines of the event caused a sensation in the

East. At long last, the Canadian government had been provoked into another distasteful, not to mention expensive, military campaign. A force of over 5000 men [1] (only 400 of whom were regular troops) was quickly mobilized and sent west. It was named the North-West Field Force (NWFF) and placed under the questionable command of Major General Frederick Middleton, a British career officer. The Force consisted of cavalry, four field guns--nine pounders (with "nine" being the weight of the shell)--and the very latest in military hardware: a Gatling Gun, loaned to the Canadian government by an armaments manufacturer and operated by Captain A. L. Howard of the Connecticut National Guard. By far the most media-hyped weapon of the NWFF, the Gatling ultimately achieved relatively little success. (Afterwards, the Métis survivors condescendingly referred to it as *le rababou* , or noisemaker) (Hildebrandt 33). But it was the sheer weight of numbers, rather than respective armaments, that posed the greatest threat to the Métis at Batoche. Altogether, Dumont could not have commanded more than 300 men at any one time (estimates vary significantly from account to account), although the number was probably closer to 150. In addition, the Métis had little in the way of supplies. Clearly, a protracted siege could not possibly favour their situation. Neither, however, (considering the discrepancy in numbers) could an open meeting of armies offer much in the way of successful probability. Unfortunately for the Métis at Batoche, Riel's ultimate strategy--to which Dumont, a capable tactician, inscrutably bowed--was a compromise between these two equally bad options. Riel refused to allow his soldiers to engage in the kind of guerilla warfare to which they were most accustomed: he denied them the only scenario they had any reasonable chance of surviving. Instead, Riel relied on divine intervention, convinced that Batoche was God's chosen land and he, the chosen one.

> 'God bless Riel', says Jules Tonnerre
> But the cannon *Anglais* won't listen to prayer. (482)

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[1] Middleton's own force at Batoche was comprised of only 900 men. The rest of the NWFF was detailed to subdue Chiefs Poundmaker and Big Bear while restoring general order to the vast North-West.

Riel is said to have walked the battlefields armed only with a white cross--an inspiring image, perhaps, though militarily reprehensible. In the final analysis, Riel's miracle was a bust. He had led his people, not to the promised land, but to the desolation of shattered hope.

2. The Battle

Military philosophy differentiates between strategy and tactics. Strategy concerns an army's positioning *before* battle; tactics, its activity *during* battle. In the Métis camp at Batoche, these elements of war--strategy and tactics--were divided, respectively, between Riel and Dumont. The former's decision to restrict the Métis force to a defensive, openly confrontational posture was the ultimate cause of its own destruction. By contrast, the latter's plan of defences--consisting of skillfully placed rifle-pits--along with tactical decisions made throughout the battle sustained the Métis resistance and stretched its fighting capacity to the utmost limit (four days) in the face of an overwhelmingly superior enemy. Defeat was the only possible result of the Métis stand at Batoche. They were outnumbered, under-supplied, and fighting a kind of trench warfare to which they were, for the most part, unaccustomed. The decision to abstain from a protracted campaign of harassment and guerilla warfare cannot be overstated as the single greatest mistake of the Métis forces in 1885. Riel's order to make a stand at Batoche represents yet another irrefutable law of history: that few moments in war are as dangerous for one's own side as when a politician decides to play the part of general (and vice versa). Supporting examples are multitudinous. One thinks immediately of Churchill's Gallipoli, Hitler's second front, the Pretender's Culloden, etc. Had Riel limited himself to prayers and spiritual fulfilment, Dumont might perhaps have stalled and terrorized Middleton's forces--through ambush and demolition--long enough to wring from Ottawa a beneficial peace. Such supposition is, of course, entirely ungrounded, but I do not think it unreasonable to assert--with absolute certainty--that Dumont, acting alone, could have fought a superior war. It is clear from an analysis of the battle that the Métis were out of their element. The prairie horse lords, raised in the fighting traditions of ambush and swift attack, could not adapt

to the slow attrition of trench warfare. For the Canadians, victory was only a matter of time. The *true* battle--that which carried the most danger--consisted of their long journey from the East, a sojourn fraught with potential perils that the Métis abstained from inflicting. By simply arriving--intact--at the place of battle, the Canadians had in fact won the war. However, a conclusion such as this is the privilege of historical distance. To the men of the NWFF, the battle that awaited them in the tiny village ahead seemed as ominous and as deadly as any other. The qualities of their enemy were entirely unknown. Surely it was this sense of ominous mystery, more than any other factor, which represented the Métis' most significant advantage.

On May 8, 1885, Middleton was encamped some seven miles upstream of Batoche, awaiting the arrival of the merchant steamer *Northcote* . On board were 80 reinforcements, not to mention Captain Howard's Gatling Gun, but to the General these additions to his force were incidental compared to the potential value of the steamer itself. By stacking bags of sand and equipment crates along the decks, Middleton had fortified the *Northcote* against small arms fire from the shore. The steamer was to be an integral element of his strategy to take the village. By sending it downstream at a rate equal to that of the advancing troops, Middleton hoped to catch the Métis in a crossfire, thereby simplifying the task of clearing the rifle pits closest to the water. It seemed reasonable to suspect that the Métis would not anticipate such a bold move. Consequently, Middleton considered the steamer to be a pivotal factor of the campaign.

At 6:00 am the following morning, the Canadians were on the march. The *Northcote* headed for its rendezvous, but the current was a little faster than expected. Middleton's Navy reached the foot of the village well ahead of the troops and was forced to anchor. There, it was met with a fierce barrage from *both* sides of the river: from Métis snipers who had clearly been awaiting its arrival. Though fortified on the upper decks, the *Northcote's* crew could not afford to be sitting targets. She slipped anchor hastily and headed downstream--running the gauntlet, as it were--absorbing the undivided attention of Dumont's rifle pits along the river banks. Fearing incapacitation and capture, the *Northcote* picked up speed and hurled itself into another Métis ambush at the ferry crossing. There, at the north end of the village, a thick cable,

raised across the river, toppled the smokestacks and started a small fire. With greatly reduced power, the *Northcote* drifted uselessly downstream, knocked out of the battle before the troops had even come close to the rendezvous point. Middleton's opening move in the chess game at Batoche--the first and last naval engagement on the prairie--was a complete failure.

By knocking out the steamer, Dumont's men had their first and last taste of somewhat limited victory (the *Northcote* was never captured and suffered only a single casualty). It was, however, an effective boost of morale. By contrast, Middleton received the news in a dark temper. The incident had forced upon him the need to forge a new plan: an exacting process which would, in fact, occupy the General for two more days. For the time being, he decided to concentrate his forces in a combined thrust against the south-west corner of the Métis perimeter. Using the church and rectory as orientation points, Middleton sent his men west against a well-defended height of land called Mission Ridge. Meanwhile, the Canadian batteries went to work, firing on exposed wooden structures in the vicinity to eliminate potential cover from which Métis snipers might otherwise operate. But the Ridge itself could not be traversed. By early afternoon, it was clear that the Canadian advance was at a standstill. On the plain, several buildings were in flames, but little else had been achieved. Around 3:00 pm, Middleton's troops, blessed now with a baptism of fire, carefully withdrew from the field. Geographically, first contact had failed to yield the fruits of success: there had been, for all intents and purposes, no advance or gain of ground. However, significant observations had been made as to the relative strength and supplies of the other side. The discrepancy in the numbers of the opposing forces were made glaringly apparent. Middleton may have returned to camp somewhat impatient with the day's result, but it was now impossible to feel in any way uncertain about the eventual outcome.

The Canadian camp itself was something of an engineering miracle. Middleton had prudently decided not to march back the seven miles to his original starting-point. Instead, he chose a site not 200 yards south-east of the church and had a colossal *Zareba,* or enclosed earthen work, constructed. The reserve troops who had not fought for Mission Ridge had been detailed to help dig the structure which enclosed over 12 acres and was able to

accommodate the entirety of the NWFF's baggage (including 160 wagons, 80 cattle and 600 horses). Within the perimeter of the giant trench, the wagons were set end to end in a circle, reinforced by crates and miscellaneous equipment. Here, the troops were able to sleep in relative safety while scouts managed to reconnoitre with ease. Throughout the night, unsuccessful attempts were made by the Métis to encourage a stampede among the closely-packed animals in the corral. Snipers exchanged sporadic fire, but Dumont stopped short of an actual attack.

The morning of May 10 found the NWFF engaged, once again, in a fight for Mission Ridge. Meanwhile, the General took a bodyguard of mounted scouts, as well as the Gatling Gun, north to a height of land which overlooked the village and the layout of Dumont's eastern perimeter. This wide, flat plateau where Middleton stood, known locally as La Jolie Prairie, was an excellent vantage point and, considering its close proximity to the village, a potentially strategic base of operations. However, it soon became obvious that the Métis shared this view and took any incursion on the plain very seriously. The barrage from the rifle pits to their west increased significantly, and Captain Howard was kept busy at his modern gun as he tried to silence them. Under heavy fire, Middleton withdrew, but not before making a critical observation: a large number of Dumont's forces had been shifted from the south to meet the Canadians on the plateau. This was confirmed back in camp that afternoon when it was reported that a temporary advance made over Mission Ridge and beyond coincided with Middleton's foray on the Jolie Prairie. Dumont had recognized the Prairie as the weakest point in the line and had, therefore, overcompensated the distribution of his scanty forces to protect it. But in strengthening the north, he had weakened his south. On a chance surveying expedition, Middleton had stumbled on the key to success. The Canadians who had broken through that morning had been disorganized--unprepared for a general advance--and had, therefore, been easily beaten back. But things would be different next time.

May 11, a Sunday, saw little action. This inactivity was more a result of caution, rather than religion, on the part of the Canadian forces. Middleton sent out his scouts to gather as much information as possible concerning the exact placement of Dumont's troops. The field guns shelled the Métis encampment in

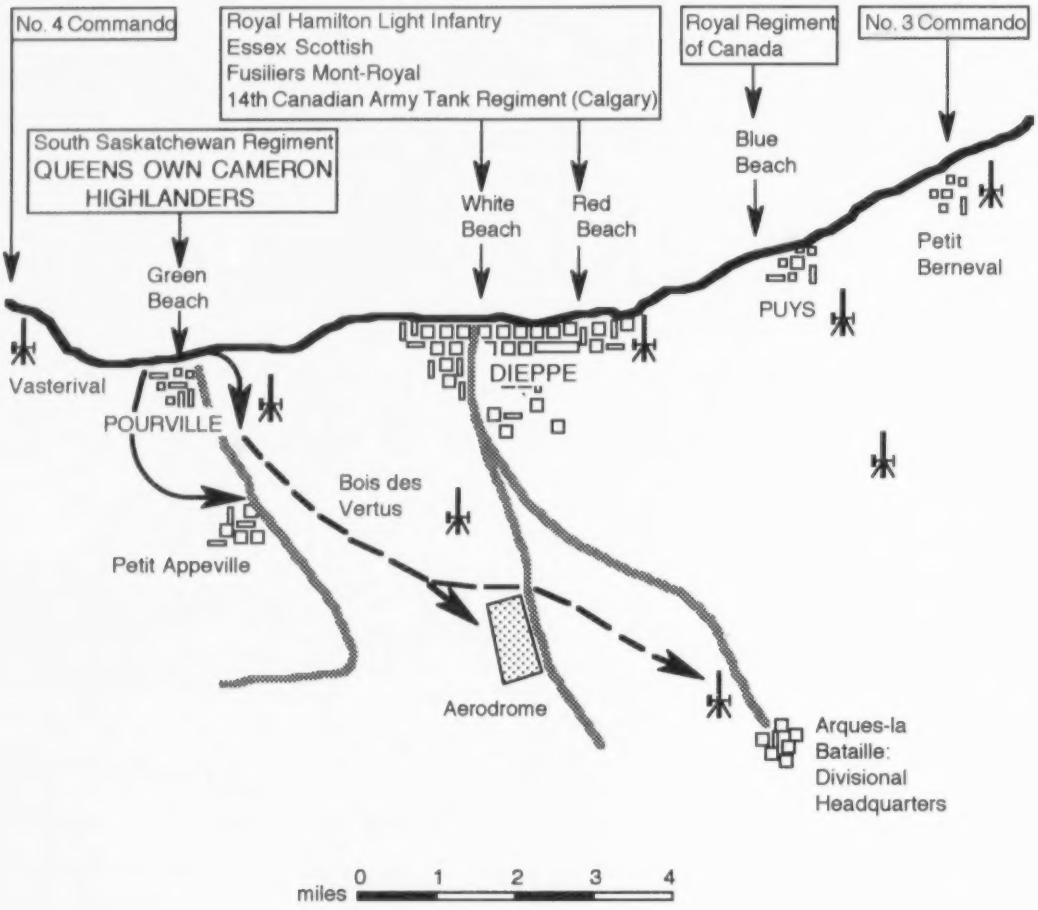
the distance as the troops prepared themselves for the next day's decisive action.

Finally, on May 12, the sun rose for the last time over Riel's sovereign outpost. General Middleton's plan was simple: a diversionary force consisting of 150 scouts, a field gun and the Gatling, marched immediately for the Jolie Prairie. Once they were in position--receiving the reinforced Métis fire--the main body of the NWFF swept through the south, over Mission Ridge and straight into Batoche itself. The tactic was a success. Dumont's men, already desperately short of ammunition (some were reduced to shooting rocks and nails), food, and troops, collapsed in the wake of the Canadian charge. The Métis were generally crushed by the sheer weight of their own deprivation, not to mention Middleton's tactics on the field. When the paper-thin centre finally broke, Dumont's army was transformed to a confederation of individuals, each equally shattered and afraid for the lives of his family. As Middleton's forces surged through the village, the Métis dropped their weapons and sought out their wives and children, mindful of the atrocities of 1869, when Wolsely's men entered Fort Garry. Dumont moved secretly among his men for several hours after the battle itself--trying to regroup--but it was to no avail. At the last minute, the great warrior himself escaped into the bush. Riel, meanwhile, had voluntarily surrendered.

Suddenly, it was all over. Superior weapons--not superior values--had triumphed on the prairies as they would in any place. Riel's 'miracle' was a bust and the Métis dream of autonomy was over. Their battles would, ever after, be restricted to those of the mind. "After that," Stacey says, "the *brois-brûlé* , the French-Indians, the *Métis* , those who sang Falcon's Song, once the prairie horse lords, would be known as half-breeds and would live the way the Tonnerres lived, in ramshackledom, belonging nowhere. Their name meant thunder, but she did not know until a long time later..." (Fire-Dwellers 236). It was the thunder of 1885--transformed to the power of myth--that would personify them forever.

DIEPPE: August 19, 1942

A lot of the Manawaka boys were killed... at Dieppe, I think it was, some place where the casualties were heavy, as the newspapers put it, making them sound like leaden soldiers, no one's sons (Stone Angel, 244).



LEGEND

Movements of the Cameron Highlanders [AS PLANNED].....

Actual progress of the Highlanders on August 19.....

Major German Batteries.....

1. Background

In 1942, on the eve of Canada's first major action of the war, Margaret Laurence was sixteen years old and generally ignorant of European events. Like most Canadians, she regarded the situation overseas as a remote yet vaguely relevant feature of her generation, the worst consequence of which was a marked shortage of eligible young men. Since 1940, Canadian soldiers had been garrisoned in England as a precautionary measure against a German invasion. However, the dreaded invasion had not occurred and by 1942--considering the clear supremecy of allied air and naval power in the North Atlantic--it was not likely to, either. On the homefront, Canadian interest in the war was beginning to wane. The patriotic fervor which had charged the last months of 1939 was inching, almost imperceptibly, towards ambivalence. The horror of December, 1941, did little to alleviate this. The British surrender of Hong Kong and its token garrison--including the men of the Winnipeg Grenadiers--served to remind Canadians of the tragedy of war, but did little to promote it. There was nothing heroic about Hong Kong. For the ill-prepared Canadians who had been transferred the previous summer from garrison duty in Jamaica, capitulation was a lesson in Imperial politics. The British, to save face, had not been prepared to abandon their royal colony outright. But the concept of Canadian soldiers as sacrificial lambs did not sit well with fellow countrymen back home. Support for continuing the war began to sag alarmingly, especially in Quebec. For Mackenzie King, under pressure from the besieged allied forces to increase Canadian involvement, the political dangers were clear. Something would have to be done to placate Churchill, Roosevelt and the others: an action designed so as to simultaneously boost morale at home and increase the confidence of Canadian soldiers abroad. The consensus of King's cabinet, not to mention his generals in the field, was that the Second Division had lain dormant in British fields for far too long. Their record of legal infractions since 1940 (23039, mostly attributed to the abuse of alcohol) spoke volumes about the generally negative impatience of the troops (Atkin 18). It was the early summer of 1942.

The events at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, had finally drawn the reluctant United States officially into the fray. Hitler

joined the Japanese in a joint declaration of war against the Americans immediately, which meant that Roosevelt could now claim a real stake in the European war. By the summer of 1942, he was pushing for a beachhead in northern France: a strategy that seemed to be the fastest route to a German surrender. Meanwhile, Stalin, who had also been the victim of a surprise attack in 1941, was vehement in his demands for a second front to alleviate the incredible pressures with which his heroic Red Army were somehow coping. In his urging and in the horrendous state of the Eastern Front were the fast-developing traces of real desperation, and the western allies were beginning to fear the repercussions of a separate Soviet peace. In that event, the bulk of the *Wehrmacht* (German Armed Forces) could conceivably be returned to France. This was a serious, though perhaps unjustified, fear among allied strategists, for, though Stalin may have accepted fair terms from the Germans at some point, it is highly unlikely that Hitler would call off his invasion or in any way set aside the goal of eastern *lebensraum* (living space) for the German people to which he had devoted his career and, indeed, his life. But the prospect of ninety additional divisions poised across the tiny English Channel pleased no one. Even the low risk of such an occurrence was too much. Stalin would have to be appeased somehow.

It was from this background of multi-national need that the fateful raid on Dieppe was born. Perhaps the immense nature of converging powers can only be understood from the sort of distanced perspective that is the best quality of historical account. From a distance of over fifty years, the raid on Dieppe seems to have been the obvious, if not the inevitable, result of the irresistible forces of politics both at home and abroad. But to a young girl of sixteen--whether it be Morag Gunn, Vanessa MacLeod, or Jean Margaret Wemyss--the action itself, complete with its own unimaginable version of defeat, was a thunderclap of horror. It was on that day and none other--August 19, 1942--that the war was finally carried home.

Certainly across the country, the news of the failed Dieppe raid was a kind of *reveille* , an awakening of the nation to the colossal prospect of a *world* war: an event that would touch the lives of everyone, regardless of the distance at which it was then being waged. Ironically however, unlike the news from Hong Kong half a year before, the effect of Dieppe's legacy was, initially,

profound shock, and then a deeper sense of pride. The raid that had been a military nightmare became, almost overnight, something of a public relations triumph. It was most likely the sense of loss that welded the country in a common bond. The boy soldiers of Dieppe were national heroes: the first of all the allied armies to break into Hitler's Europe. These were not the sacrificed victims of British foreign policy (or so it was thought), as had been widely perceived in the case of Hong Kong. The news swept across the country in an instant of triumph and pain. A binding national sentiment was conceived that could not have been engineered in a million years of ardent propaganda. Dieppe was the Second World War's equivalent of Vimy Ridge. Beyond facts, history and logic, both were examples of supreme and infinite heroism in which everyone could share. For a country at war, the value of such a moment is inestimable.

But such is hardly the view of Dieppe as conceived in Manawaka, though Laurence herself has identified the infamous raid as an important factor of her work. "It runs as a leitmotif through all my so-called Manawaka fiction," she writes; "in a way, it runs through my whole life"(Dance?) Actually, apart from The Diviners--in which Dieppe itself is dealt with as a relatively important event in the lives of characters--it is the grand spirit of war as a whole, rather than specifically that of Dieppe, that truly runs through and influences the Manawaka books. It is, of course, Laurence's own dark view of the war, rather than that impulsive national sanction of historical record, that holds sway. The Manawakan warriors have no love in their hearts for Dieppe. Their opinion of violent struggle (however hypocritical) springs from the author's own. "In my hatred of war," Laurence writes, " I can't find words to express my outrage at these recurring assaults upon the human flesh, mind and spirit" (Dance 84).

Hagar, for instance, is not the glad recipient of national fame or heroism. In her eyes, Dieppe is just another massacre transformed, through official channels, to a semblance of valour. It "was [just] some place where the casualties were heavy, as the newspapers put it, making them sound like leaden soldiers, no one's sons" (244). And yet she wonders how her favorite son, John might have fared there, had he been spared the indignity of an accidental death. Perhaps when she lies to Mrs. Steiner by labeling John a casualty of war it is in this part of it--Dieppe--

that she fondly lays him. But Hagar's cynicism is a hallmark of her sisters in arms. Stacey Cameron's strongest memory of Dieppe is shared by all and involves only the mourning of the soldiers lost to war. The boys from Manawaka all joined the same regiment: The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. "After Dieppe," Stacey recalls, "[I] could never again listen to the pipes playing *The March of the Cameron Men* . Even twenty years later, it remained a pibroch for them" (213).

Of all the Manawaka books, only The Diviners actually has one of its major characters go to war. When Jules Tonnerre leaves for England as a private "in his thick rough-textured uniform with the badge of the [Cameron's] on his sleeve" (147), he represents the dangerous ignorance of every recruit for every war in history. When Christie suggests the possibility of harm, Jules narrows his eyes and growls, "I joined for the pay, Christie. I don't aim to get hurt" (148). Later, when he returns to tell Morag about Dieppe, 'getting hurt' has taken a back seat to the more surreal quality of death. "Didn't seem very real at the time," Jules tells her; "Guess you go kind of crazy, like. You just think *Well well that's John Lobodiak dead.* It doesn't mean much at the time" (180). In Jules is the perfect spokesman for Laurence's claimed perception of war: no heroics, no last stands: only banal eradications of life.

2. The Battle

Jules' version of Dieppe is, of course, limited by the individual's perspective. Quite often, as in Christie's memory of Cambrai, a soldier's personal recollection of battle holds little or no relevance for the 'big picture' in which army groups advance or retreat in geographical terms. However, in the case of Dieppe, where a soldier's chance of being killed, wounded or captured was actually greater than fifty percent, Jules' exclusive memory of fallen comrades accurately represents the situation. The consistent Canadian experience at Dieppe was that of a massacre all along the nine-mile invasion front. Some parts of the beach were worse than others (Puys in particular, where the Royal Regiment from Toronto fought), but survivors would ultimately arrive at the consensus that it did not matter where one had landed. A chance meeting, in the English Channel, with a German convoy had ensured that nearly 1000 troops (mostly British) had

never landed at all. Forced to return to England empty-handed, these men were the lucky ones. On the shale beaches of Dieppe itself, there was no more luck to be had. Poor planning, inadequate reconnaissance and the general inexperience of the Second Division had virtually ensured disaster.

But on the morning of August 19, 1942, such was not the anticipation of the Canadians, most of whom were simply eager for action after two long years of garrison duty in England. The entire force was comprised of over 6000 troops, the bulk of whom were Canadian (5000) in addition to 1000 British Commandos, 50 US Rangers (along for observational purposes), and two dozen Free French Commandos. Also included were 60 tanks of the 14th Army Tank Regiment (from Calgary), as well as 70 RAF squadrons that, according to John Campbell, would fight above the combatants at Dieppe in the single costliest day of the entire war (106 allied planes were destroyed) (38).

The plan involved two essential operations. First, the Commando units (British, French and American) landed at the two extremes of the Dieppe beach. Major German batteries at Petit Berneval (to the extreme east) and Vasterival (to the west) had to be knocked out before the arrival of the transport fleet. When these objectives had been achieved, the fleet itself, split into three groups, landed at timed intervals along the shore. The plan called for inland penetration aimed at various enemy installations. From Puys, to the east, the Royal Regiment was supposed to swing out in a small arc towards Dieppe, knocking out enemy field batteries along the way. To the west, from Pourville, the prairie troops (Cameron Highlanders and the men of the South Saskatchewan Regiment) were to swing south through the village of Petit Appeville in a flanking advance towards Dieppe. Having reached the main road near Bois des Vertus, the Camerons were to link up with the tank regiment and head south to attack the Aerodrome, Arques la-Bataille (German Divisional Headquarters) and a large coastal battery. In the centre, the main body of troops (including the tanks) were to engage in a direct, sea-borne assault on Dieppe itself. The Canadians were to engage the enemy, achieve their objectives and then withdraw. The entire operation was not expected to exceed eight hours.

In the annals of Canadian historiography, the story of Dieppe is often an attempt to divine responsibility for the failure. But the

assignation of blame, in terms of individuals, is generally a vague exercise in futility. Allied commanders like Lord Louis Mountbatten (Chief of Combined Operations) took great pains in their lives and memoirs to defend their own involvement in the affair. As Villa notes, Dieppe was Mountbatten's most sensitive memory, one about which, for the purposes of posterity, he "did not scruple at leaning over the shoulder of historians to tell them what they should write" (202). Like Churchill, Lord Louis would define that tragic action in terms of a critical dress-rehearsal for Normandy. "The Duke of Wellington said the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton," he wrote, "and I say the Battle of Normandy was won on the beaches of Dieppe" (Whitehead 174). But the knowledge won there was costly and too inefficiently had. From a force of 5000 actually landed on the beach, less than 2300 returned. In military terms, these were surely unacceptable losses. But Mountbatten's argument was indicative of the official Allied response. Never were words more the enemy of truth.

Subsequent scholars of the Dieppe raid were often uncertain as to its exact purpose. Consequently, analysis tended to be founded on one of two assumptions: (1) that an ill-equipped and under-supported attempt to establish a permanent bridgehead (as a launching pad for full-scale European invasion) in France was smashed by German resistance, or (2) that a commando-style "raid," for the purposes of temporary reconnaissance, gained vital information relative to the Normandy invasion and then subsequently withdrew. As Peterson demonstrates in his citation of the opening paragraphs of the Outline Plan (drawn up in early June by the Combined Operations Staff), the operation at Dieppe was quite clearly a raid, rather than an invasion:

> I. Intelligence reports indicate that Dieppe is not heavily defended...
> II. It is therefore proposed to carry out the raid with the following objectives:
> (a.) destroying enemy defences;
> (b.) destroying the aerodrome installations at St. Aubin;
> (c.) destroying... power stations, dock and rail facilities and petrol dumps;
> (d.) removing invasion barges for our own use;
> (e.) removal of secret documents from the Divisional Headquarters at Arques-la-Bataille;
> (f.) to capture prisoners; (66)

However, even as a *raid* , the operation was woefully under-supported. Point IV of the Outline plan called for "bomber action," none of which materialized that day. In addition, the contention that Dieppe was "not heavily defended" was to be tragically disproved by the troops on the beach. A deadly multitude of machine-gun nests and concrete bunkers, not to mention shore batteries, had not been accounted for on the maps distributed to Canadian officers. What met the eyes of Canadian troops wading ashore on August 19 was not a lightly-defended hamlet on the edge of the sea. Dieppe was, rather, a well-manned, highly efficient enemy fortress, the capture of which probably required a force of twice as many men, in addition to heavy bombing and naval support. It was, perhaps, this misrepresentation (or misunderstanding) of Dieppe's strength which, more than any other factor, contributed to the Canadian defeat.

But a tragedy of the magnitude of Dieppe is always the result of combining circumstances. For instance, heavy bombing was not included in the operation for fear that excessive rubble would block the narrow streets and prevent the advance of the tanks. And yet, as it turned out, the tanks were incapacitated from the very beginning, hundreds of yards short of the town itself. The loose shale of the French beach prevented the treads from gaining any forward momentum. As sitting targets for the defending forces, they were quickly dispatched. Twisted and burning in the path of German shells, their only function, ultimately, was to provide cover for the Canadians on the shore. Not one allied tank was ever recovered from the beach (Whitehead 105): their destruction was indicative of the shameful chaos of Operational Command.

For Jules Tonnerre and all veterans of Dieppe, the operation was an education in horror. For the Cameron Highlanders (Jules' outfit), praised in the annals of war for penetrating further into enemy territory than any other group, it was a day of chaos and lost comrades. The statistics of the Camerons tell their own cold, yet accurate account: 493 embarked, 68 killed, 167 taken prisoners, 258 returned. (158 men had been wounded, some of whom--left behind on the beach--are included in the number of 'prisoners') (Maguire 199). The odds of returning from Dieppe unharmed (physically) were 493 : 258, or slightly less than fifty percent. Churchill, like Mountbatten, would ignore this grim equation with reference to tangible gain: "The casualties of this

memorable action may seem out of proportion to the results, " he warned, "[but] it would be wrong to judge the episode solely by such a standard" (68).

After Dieppe, Canadians would go on to fight in many other battles across Europe, but none would ever achieve a comparable level of infamy. In terms of military analysis, there is little one can say of Dieppe that even approaches commendation.

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